

ORIENTAL CINEMA

AND VIDEO

JAN #1
\$2.75

THE NINJA ISSUE!
NINJAS! SUPERHEROES!
HONG KONG ACTION FILMS!
GIANT MONSTERS!
JACKIE CHAN!
ASIA'S FEMME FATALES!



ORIENTAL CINEMA

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Pictured to the
left: Maggie
Cheung

Jesus Christ! Oh God! Oops, there I go talking to myself again. But seriously (almost), it's amazing that OC has reached a 16th issue! The odds of it surviving this long were as likely as finding a vegetarian in a slaughterhouse. If you're unfamiliar with OC, then I don't really like you, but feel I should introduce it to you; here's its condensed history:

1976: Being a little boy in elementary school, I had yet to deal with sex, drugs, condoms, alcohol or peer pressure (THAT all happened a few months later). So I spent my time creating handwritten xeroxed fanzines like JAPANESE MONSTERS, JAPANESE MOVIE SCI-FI and JAPANESE MONSTERS & SUPERHEROES. These kiddie-zines were competing with other rags from fans, all trying to be the next JAPANESE FANTASY FILM JOURNAL (Greg Shoemaker's grand daddy fanzine).

1977: It was around this time that OC arose out of the remains of all these other rags. Again, the goal was to be as serious, in-depth and uptight as possible. JFFJ, JAPANESE GIANTDOM and my fanzines were intricate yet dull, so unlike

my real-life behavior. So OC's 1970s Volume was a typical, straight forward newsletter for technogeeks.

1980: OC continued, but the other 'Japantasy' zines became as extinct as the dinosaur movies they drooled over. OC was the only one not concerned with how many toes were on the original Godzilla costume; since it covered more genres, there were always a few readers. So OC's second volume, that of the 1980s, lacked any major competition; no risk of losing readers to some other rag.

1985: By this time, I knew I could be myself. At the risk of offending everyone, I put in as much of myself as possible, into MY fanzine, which officially became "DAMON FOSTER PRESENTS O.C." Screw the xeroxed look, I was into color covers, creative lay-outs, ultra rare, ground breaking info, and injecting my own philosophy and attitude into OC. No more whiny analysis, but plenty of cynicism, humor, social statements and the real me! Sure, I was egotistical about it, but felt I had a right to be; considering the hard work and money I put into it. I NEVER broke even, the zine cost me



Editor Damon Foster (right) in AGE OF DEMONS

an arm and a leg!

1990s: So welcome to OC's 3rd volume! Somewhat smaller, but it was either make it smaller or make no OC at all. This is the first time I ever dealt with a publisher, so I don't know what to expect. Hopefully, it will be easier and more efficient now that Hugh Gallagher is stuck with typesetting and paste-ups. Hah! Now it's all HIS problem! I painstakingly typed up the other OCs myself, on a Macintosh and IBM, Desktop Publishing and Word Perfect were never my strong points. But most importantly, thanks to Hugh, OC continues to flourish, and a whole new genre of young fanzines about Far Eastern films. The only difference is that the 1970s zines only cared about Godzilla, while the newer ones focus almost exclusively on HK's trendy hits. OC has seen fanzines come and go, so odds are, these newer whipper snappers will die out once the HK craze dies. If history is a lesson, OC just might be around after the rest disappear (again), and will be covering whatever new Far Eastern fandom comes along. Regardless; so there you have it! The history of all three volumes of OC! Next time, I'll be sure to tell you my life story!

Those of you who are interested in getting future issues and subscriptions should contact Hugh Gallagher. If you're interested in information about back issues, or wish to send comments or contributions, contact me. Damon Foster, P.O. Box 576, Fremont, CA 94537-0576. Don't mix our addresses up! Hugh is in Illinois, I'm in California! We're both different people involved in different aspects of the business! We both have separate lives and projects. So don't confuse us. Any questions delivered to either of us, however, must be accompanied by a Self-Addressed Stamped Envelope, to insure a response.

At this point, OC's 1990s volume is experimental; the categories, columns and genres may be drastically changed next

issue. To save space, older OC columns like TERROR YAKI and KAIZO NINGEN UPDATE have been combined for form this issue's JAPANTASY column. I don't necessarily like combining Japan's superheroes with Japan's science fiction movies, since both genres offer so much individually. But this is just an experiment. Last issue's CHOP SOCKEY REPORT and MODERN HEROES OF HONG KONG have been blended into HONG KONG HEROES, NEW AND OLD. Again, the newer HK films offer so many genres, as do the old, so maybe combining them is unfair; we'll see. For you newer readers, the ones I don't like as yet, you may feel alienated or out of touch when I occasionally use phrases and words you've never heard of, like 'Kamen Rider', 'Sayuki', 'Sentai', 'gyaras', 'Uchu Keiji', 'chanbara' or JAC. Sorry, but I've described and introduced all this 'new' stuff many times before, and haven't enough time nor space to give a history lesson. This is not a sales pitch to get you to buy back issues, I'm just tired of repeating myself every time I gain a new reader! Keep in mind that OC is designed to introduce you to a whole new world of genres, films and TV, from various countries,

and doing so is bound to be confusing and frustrating at first. The fact that about 75% of these productions are not available in English may annoy you all the more.

And now MY DISCLAIMER: I've always hated censorship, but see nothing wrong with warning you about my writing style. The main goal, is to inform. However, I see it as very important to amuse you as well (while not all of you care about all of OC's genres. Hopefully you have a sense of humor, therefore you'll read the whole issue, not just the section on John Woo). So occasionally, I try to inject my type of crude humor into my articles. Everybody's opinion can offend somebody else, nobody is innocent. I haven't the time to find out what each and every one of you finds offensive, so I have no way to keep my jokes unoffensive to all of you. Keep in mind that it's humor and only humor, I'm not trying to hurt anybody's feelings. Also, my opinions are indeed MY OPINIONS. I'm pretty sick of all these other publications calling me and my work 'opinionated'; which is hypocritical, we're all opinionated to somebody else. When I write a negative review of a film you like, I might say, "This film sucks", instead of "I think this film sucks". That's because it takes up less space that way! So keep in mind, it's all my personal viewpoint, always open to debates and second opinions. However, I should point out that I am God, I created all these movies, as well as you, and I shouldn't be questioned; or I'll strike you down! [And if you believe that, you've no concept of sarcasm and shouldn't be reading OC, and are probably one of the moronic writers who thinks I'm opinionated].

But enough of my 'opinionated!' Get a load of this edition, the Ninja Issue! The ninja film and TV genres has more productions than there are backed-up toilets in a Mexican bus station, so I felt it was time to do an in-depth look at what's easily the worst subgenre (in a fun sort of way) of the world of Far Eastern action! Excuse me while I go throw up.

"B-B-B-B-Bassaaaaaam!!!!!!",

Damon Foster

AGE OF DEMONS

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CELLULOID ASSASSINS

Just as karate came from kung fu, just as Gamera came from Godzilla, just as all these newer rags came from OC, the ninjas came from the Lin Kuei ("Forest Demons"), a Chinese clan from around the Shang Dynasty (1523-1028 BC, I can't remember exactly when, my memory isn't that good). Then Lin Kuei were a mere family trying to survive in the wilderness, much like **THE WILDERNESS FAMILY**, except that they constantly studied nature to overcome the hardships of their environment. Their numbers grew over several centuries, as they continued to study and practice what would later become Japan's ninja arts.

These ancient Chinese survivalists, having undergone excruciating training for generations, had achieved abilities as natural hunters which far surpassed what was considered humanly possible. As China's population grew, the clan came in contact with nearby villages, and found its townfolk easy prey to kill, kidnap, steal from, or simply kick them in the kitch nuts.

Some of the Lin C traveled, thereby spreading these acquired arts to other countries, resulting in Korea's sales and of course, Japan's ninjas. The ninja clans perfected espionage; they were hired killers, eager to work for whichever warlord offered the biggest bucks. They had no need to stand on the edge of a road with a sign reading, "I will assassinate for food." They were skilled at numerous weapons, including the koto and sword.

The next three paragraphs are about the



1977's **NINJA ARASHI** battles the bad guys!

way Japan, China, and (smoker) the U.S. of A. have invented their own ninja movies. It's important to mention that all three countries are presenting action movies, not historical. True ninjas were assassins, not superheroes or adventurers. The goal of the ninja was to sneak in and kill as quickly as possible, and then get the hell out, not to perform karate, acrobats, or long drawn out sword fights to avenge his teacher's death.

Their technique, called Shinobujutsu (based on the Shinobi clan, one of the ninja groups), is called 'Ninjutsu' by Americans and other non-Japanese. Ninjas were not magical, nor were they invincible. Nor are their movies. To me, the ninja films represent the worst subgenre of the martial arts movies because there are way too many ninja movies to review in just one lifetime. I'm eliminating most entries which lack the word 'ninja' in their titles. After these next three intros, I'll painstakingly rent & review every ninja film I can get my slimy paws on, and I'm not looking forward to it. You owe me big time for this one, buddy.

JAPANESE NINJA FLICKS:

Them that Japanese (over in Japan), founders of ninjutsu, are coincidentally, the founders of the best ninja action films. Since the 1940s, ninjas have appeared in period films, though normally as background henchmen or villains, the heroes of those clean cut years had to be morally-correct. Samurai's, not hired killers. If nothing else, the costume dramas of the 1940s & 1950s offered a remotely accurate look at the

legends of ninjas. But eventually, the times began a change, and Japanese were ready for 'good' ninjas by the early 1960s.

Ninjas were finally getting more screen time, but their legends were distorted by the influence of comic book superheroes. The B&W TV show **NINJA BUTAI GEKO** (Toei, 1964) had a modern setting, about a team of modern day ninjas who used their swords, guns, shurikens and bombs to fight the bad guys. In what looks like a Japanese prelude to **MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE**. Though as exciting as watching ice melt in slow motion, the program was important historically, in that it had the first heroic team of ninjas.

Along with **THE SAMURAI** (another influential 1960s series), it was dubbed in English and released to Australia. By the mid-1960s, these top rated shows had driven the Aussies into 'ninja fever,' something that we dumb Americans wouldn't encounter until nearly 20 years later! While Australian kiddies collected samurai and ninja trading cards, Japanese producers explored new grounds in cinematic ninjutsu. They incorporated fantasy elements and monsters, resulting in wild forces like **THE MAGIC SERPENT** and **WATARI THE NINJA**. Added excitement indeed, but the facts again got put on a backburner.

One of the more popular ninja hero programs of the 1960s was **KAMEN NO NINJA AKA KAGE** (Toei, 1966), which means, roughly, **MASKED NINJA WITH A RED SHADOW**. This childish fantasy series was full of cheap FX, monsters, impossible feats, and ninjas with more weapons & gadgets than Batman's utility belt. One of the main stars, little boy Yoshinobu Kaneko, also had a similar role in **WATARI THE NINJA**. Because of the international success of this movie (particularly in the Philippines), Toei created English dubbed movies, by piecing together episodes of **MASKED NINJA WITH A RED SHADOW**, now 'dubbed' into **Watan** sequels! The kid looks basically the same in both **WATARI** and the unrelated TV series, so it was no surprise when the series's movies came out as **WATARI: NINJA BOY**, **WATARI THE CONQUEROR**, **WATARI & THE 7 MONSTERS**, **WATARI AND THE FANTASTICS**, and at least three others. These English dubs were never shown in America, but a



*There he is, our main man Sonny Chiba as a ninja in **KAGE NO GUNDAN**! Without his influence, this magazine wouldn't exist*

completion called **NINJA SCOPE: THE MAGIC WORLD OF NINJA** is making the rounds in the bootlegging underground.

In the 1970s, the fantasy/hero ninjas continued, like in the full color **NINJA ARASHI** (Toei, 1972), but the influence of Sonny Chiba, and Chinese kung fu again altered the facts. At this point many ninja films became karate films (Chiba's **THE EXECUTIONER** is a perfect example, not to mention a perfect movie) even though true ninjas weren't masters of karate, karate wasn't invented until about 300 years after the ninjas were banished by the Shogun.

Chiba's 'karate ninja' concept began to influence the ninjas kiddie heroes of TV too, no more period teles like **NINJA ARASHI** or **LION MARIU**. Instead came futuristic heroes like **NINJA CYPTOR** (Toei, 1978) and **WORLD NINJA WAR: JIRAIYA** (1988).

But not all ninja martial arts films were modern karate actioners, the most well known of the 1970s were the many samurai vs. ninja movies, like Chiba's heroic Jubei Yagyu movies, and of course, the 'babyface' films (**KOZURE OKAMI**), which painted a different picture of the Yagyu ninjas. These samurai actioners are a little more faithful to the original legends than the superhero fantasies, or the karate ninja genre, but not by far.

Chiba returned as a ninja in the 1980s, along with other protagonists, in the TV

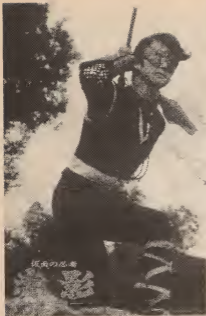
series **KAGE NO GUNDAN**. As for personal opinions on Japan's ninja movies, their quality is based on when made. Just as the 1950s and 1960s were a classic phase in Japanese chanbara, thanks to Akira Kurosawa, Hiroshi Inagaki, etc., that's when classic ninja movies were made.

The 1970s marked the downfall in Japanese cinema. There were no classic samurai movies (**SHOGUN ASSASSIN** may be fun, but it's basically a gory trash film) in the 1970s, nor were there classic ninja movies. Compare a 1960s ninja movie like **MAGIC SERPENT** or **KIRI GA KURE SAIZO** to later garbage like **NINJA WARS** or **RENEGADE NINJA**, you'll no doubt agree that Japanese film/dm's deterioration applies to ninjas too.

Because there's so little English language info on Japanese ninja films, me and August Pagone had a hell of a time trying to locate Japanese ninja movies for critical review. However, we came up with a few titles and credits, for ninja freaks to use as a point of reference. Their lack of a rating (no star) doesn't mean it's a bad film, but we never saw it.



Lion man to the rescue, fighting the Skull Ninjas!



CHINESE NINJA FLICKS-

However, in China, ninjas are exclusively the product of the 1970s kung fu movie movement. These kung fu cheapies were always portraying the Japanese as evil S.O.B.s; whether they were karatekas, judokas or ninjas. The Hong Kongese philosophy was to put a black hood on a Chinese kung fu expert and call him a ninja. With very few exceptions, the Chinese ninja movies were basically just kung fu movies under a different label. An excuse to show Chinese swordsmen wasta dozens of Japanese. Most may lack any true ninja facts or historical accuracy, but make up for it in the quality & quantity of their action (outstanding fights are the Chinese trademark; they can't be beat in any genre).

To American audiences the Chinese ninja genre can be described in two words: cut & splice. Chinese movie dudes like Thomas Tang, Joseph Li, and others were quick to jump on the bandwagon, following the regrettable success of Dudikoff's **AMERICAN NINJA** fascos. These HK schlocksters quickly re-released Godfrey

WARRIOR, NINJA: THE PROTECTOR, EMPIRE OF THE SPIRITUAL NINJA, NINJA SQUAD, NINJA DEATH SQUAD, NINJA DRAGON, CHALLENGE OF THE NINJA, NINJA'S EXTREME WEAPONS, RAGE OF A NINJA and ULTIMATE NINJA (two of the better ones)

Viewing these complex strikers is a horrendous experience, they're confusing, with bad continuity, way too many characters stupid dialogue and nothing to do with ninjas in their original cuts. Seeing any one of them is a schizophrenic experience; you're watching at least two stories at once. 1. The main filer is Chinese triad nonsense, gunplay, melodrama, romance, nudity, a little kung fu, and 'but still' dubbing 2. Random cut-of-place Caucasian ninja duels. Filmed in Korea, all of Richard Harris' scenes were done at once, making him think it was just one movie. The films have ninjas with super powers: they 'quick change', explode, WALK up trees, and in one of them, a ninjas 'magic flute' controls the actions of snakes, so they'll attack the villains!



Left Yusuburo Setaiguchi as the heroic Red Shadow in 1965's KAMEN NO NINJA aka KAGE TV series

Above: The first of ninja reptiles! Ninjas become giant monsters in MAGIC SERPENT (Toei, 1968).

Ho's cheapest 1970s gangster films (usually from places like Thailand) they could find, and re-edited & re-dubbed them into ninja flicks! Caucasian actors like Richard Harrison, Bruce Baron & others were filmed in ninja attire, and these various duels were added at random, into the low budget mobster romps, now re-titled **NINJA: AMERICAN**

Otherwise, the martial arts, acrobats and swordplay in these shots are good, though it's obvious that HK stuntmen double for the westerners once their ninja suits magically materialize.

AMERICAN NINJA FLICKS-

As mumbled earlier, them Aussies had a head start on the rest of us non-Asians, but ninjutsu gained the international spotlight in 1967, when Sean Connery teamed up with Tetsuro Tanba for **YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE**. Set in Japan, it had James Bond working out with ninjas (attired in white karate gi while they did target practice with pistols) who, when in battle, bear a striking resemblance to those in **NINJA BUTAI GEKKO** ("Phantom Agents" in Australian). This was the first example of a westernized ninja film, and five years later, David Carradine fought a ninja in **KUNG FU**.

The next major damage occurred in around 1974, when **THE KILLER ELITE**, America's first real ninja movie, showed its ugly head! It starred James Caan, and was a horrendously dull piece of shit, made by morons who can't tell the difference between Japanese and Chinese cultures & arts.

Sometime in the late 1970s (I think), there was even a ninja episode of **CHIPS**. If nothing else, the American ninja movies could only get better. They did, not that there was any way it could go lower.

In 1980, Chuck Norris dealt with ninjas in **THE OCTAGON**, which, if nothing else, was better than **KILLER ELITE**. By the time **ENTER THE NINJA?** (with Franco Nero) came out in around 1981, it was confirmed that cinematic ninjutsu was the next 'big thing'. You all know my complaints against

Background photo: Scene from *ENTER THE NINJA*, the *There goes the neighborhood* of *Ninja* films. After that *strike* came numerous other U.S. made *ninja* films

American martial arts films, we attacked them many times before. Again, the action scenes in movies like *ENTER THE NINJA* and the notorious *AMERICAN NINJA* films are terrible, and the more that I dislike most American filming techniques & scripts explains my resentment toward them. Enough said. But the likes of *KILLER ELITE*, *AMERICAN NINJA*, and *ENTER THE NINJA* proved that the damn yankies have discovered a new form of 'quick buck' exploitation film. Simply get some idiot to wear a black hood regardless of athletic capability, and you got a hit film. So the demand for *ninja* films was easily filled; today, you can't go into a video store and not see more U.S. made *ninja* films than there are hairy legs in a woman's restroom in San Francisco. Or in Nevada.

As mentioned earlier, most of these 'American' *ninja* flicks are actually cheapies out of China, re-edited, re-titled, and sometimes given new footage to 'Americanize' them. But of any U.S. *ninja* series, the most successful movies are of course the infamously 'Ninja Turtle' fiascos. Based on comic books and cartoons, they at least have decent budgets and nice battles, putting them ahead of your average *AMERICAN NINJA* ripoff. The high point of them is their fights, performed by HK stunt teams from Golden Harvest.

Another popular film series, mentioned a few sentences ago, was the *AMERICAN NINJA* films of the 1980s. The *AMERICAN NINJA* films, which I'll soon review quite unhelpfully, are an excellent example of just how bad an American martial arts film can get. They're all average budgeted and have the usual trademarks of U.S. adventures & crime dramas: like gun play, explosions, car chases, stupid jokes and predictable clichés. All feature dozens of *ninja* soldiers at unrealistic training camps, hired by some central villain not trained in *ninjutsu*. They are both lame & funny, not much blood or strong language, no nudity. They look like TV movies. They also have subtitles I don't recall.

For example, one of the full titles is *AMERICAN NINJA #3: BLOOD HUNT*. Why this title? Nobody hurts for blood, though Steve James is black, so maybe it's a racial slur.

But the two most familiar faces in the U.S. *ninja* genre are Tadashi Yamashita and Sho Kosugi. While Yamashita had a background in Asian film long before his *ninja* days, Sho Kosugi seems to be a product of the U.S. *ninja* cinema, despite his Japanese

accent (or maybe he was big in Japan at one time, I don't know). Not only has he gotten stuck in numerous *ninja* romps, but released his own line of videotapes called *NINJA THEATRE* where he hosts and performs in videotaped *ninja* duels (though the films are average HK chop sockeys, few involve *ninjas*).

Kosugi was also the main heavy in *THE MASTER*, the TV show re-released in stores as the *MASTER NINJA* series. Is it my imagination, or does Sho wear a lot of eyeliner?

WHAT THE LETTERS [AFTER THE TITLES] MEAN (A) - American movie; and most likely a bad one. (C) - Chinese movie, usually a kung fu/war/drama thriller. (J) - Japanese movie, various genres included.

A LIFE OF NINJA (C) - Were it not for its blatant disregard for animals (a snake and goldfish brutally killed on film), this would be an awesome movie. It's fun though, one minute lady *ninjas* mud-wrestle, and later, Chen Kwen Tai is body slammed, over and over, by a Japanese wrestler. The climax has rival *ninjas* Chen Kwan Tai & Yasuki Kureta fighting at a beautiful set (caverns and statues). Major fun for *ninja* kung fu freaks! ***

AMERICAN NINJA (A) - Michael Dudikoff as a *ninja* who investigates corruption on a military base in this lame farce. He gets a chance to defeat Steve James and Tedashi Yamashita, even though his fighting skill rivals that of a ladybug. *

AMERICAN NINJA 2 (A) - Better than the first, as though THATS any major accomplishment. Michael Dudikoff, Steve James and some heavies rid an island ridden of genetically altered *ninjas*, via poor fights. *

AMERICAN NINJA 3 (A) - Dudikoff is out, David Bradley (the only hero in this series capable of kicking) is in. Steve James & some Asian lady with a nice ass fight villains on a ship. *

AMERICAN NINJA 4 (A) - Michael Dudikoff is back, helping David Bradley & Kan Gampu (*LASER MISSION, KILL AND KILL AGAIN, GODS MUST BE CRAZY*) to waste *ninjas* & Arabs in Africa. *

AMMUNITION AND AMBITION (J) - [DAI KESSEN, aka *THE GRAND BATTLE*] Toei's 1968 actioner about legendary shogunate spy Hattori Hanzo, starring Hiroki Matsukata Part of the *BAND OF ASSASSINS* series.

BAND OF ASSASSINS (J) - aka *ASSASSINS, NINJA 1-IV (SHINOBI NO MONO)* 1963-1968, Raizo Ichikawa plays anti-hero *ninjas* in this series of long lost adventures.

BAND OF NINJA (J) - Little is known about this 1967 flick, though screen writer Mamoru Saito wrote scripts for *ULTRAMAN*, *ULTRASTORM*, and even *IRON KUN*, so it must be good!!

BLACK NINJA (J) - Hiroki Mitsuoka. In another Toei movie from 1967.

EMPIRE OF THE SPIRITUAL NINJA (C) - Bottom of the barrel blarney from Bangkok, featuring mixed footage from at least two different films. Some shots of Americans, others of *ninjas*, mostly about Thai detectives, ridiculous dubbing.

ESCAPE FROM HELL (J) - [MUSHI-KU NINBETSU-GHO] Directed by Kazuo Inoue and renewed by nobody (I haven't seen it), it's a 1963 film from Shochiku.

FEMALE ASSASSIN NINJA TECHNIQUE III (J) - Takushinsha's 1991-1993 3-DO *ninja* film. Starring Miki Mizuno and Miyuki Komatsu. Japanese title: *KUNOICHI NINPO-CHO*.

CHALLENGE OF THE NINJA (C) - Talk about mixed marriage! Lu Chia-lin is a kung fuer who marries a female *ninja*. In the battle-of-the-sexes, battle-of-martial-arts action/comedy from Shaw Bros. With Japan's video villain, Yasuki Kureta. See OC99. ***

CHALLENGE THE NINJA (C) - Superhero fans will recognize this as one of the *Uchiyoshi* Sampei Joseph Tai edited Bruce Barker into another Godfrey Ho tale out of Thailand. Bruce Barker's scenes as a *ninja* add unintended humor, but our Thailand's 'Jockie training' does not. Amusing story, fights galore. All the *Ninja* fights take place at the same picnic table as in *ULTIMATE NINJA*. **

COMMANDO: THE NINJA (C) - Shot on tape. It's derived from some TV series, set in modern times. Meng Fei is a truck in search of Tanaka's secret formula, encountering mobsters, Americans, babes, and a Jacob Tactel surfer-type! Dull moments, fun moments. **1/2

CRIMSON SHADOW (J) - Toei 1962 age *REVENGER IN THE SHADOW (AKAI KAGEBOSHI)*, directed by Shigenori Ozawa.

CUT THAT SHADOW (J) - [KAGE-O KIRU] 1962, Dean Dir Kazuo Ishiro

DAREDEVIL IN THE CASTLE (J) - Toho's rarely seen 1961 drama, starring Toshiro Mifune, Kyoko Kagawa, Yunko Hashi, & Akikiko Hirata. Yet another movie about the destruction of the Osaka Castle.

ENTER THE NINJA (A) - This average actioner get America's *ninja* craze rolling, unfortunately. Stars Franko Nero, whoever.

that is."

EXECUTIONER (J)- Called JIGOKU KEN ("Hell Flat") in Japan, this '74 Sonny Chiba thriller is a masterpiece of karate, slapstick & ninjutsu. Chiba, Makoto Sato & Yasuaki Kurata are at their best, in a tale of a Koge ninja battling the yakuza. OC14. *****

HISSATSU, THE (J)- Bizarre! Weird! A zany, satirical chanbara about samurai's and ninjas, rivals who team up to battle foreign devils lead by Mr. Brown, who ride bicycles while firing machine guns. Harlequin ninjas fight back with ninjutsu, infallible frogs and a jet-pack made of bombs! It's a comedy, spoofing who-knows-what, and with a silly musical score! **

LIVING BY THE SWORD (J)- Nikkatsu made this one, originally called KAGE-0 KIRU-KEN ["The Shadow Killing Sword"] in 1967. Hideki Takehashi again typescast as a heroic ninja, but seemed to disappear after the early 1970s.

KILL THE NINJA (C)- Poor lighting (bad video transfer?) ruins what could have been a fun thriller: Huang Cheng Li, a Korean and a ninja fight for a Buddha statue. Great music and fights; fun despite a dark, washed-out look. **

KIRI GA KURE SAIZO (J)- A B&W, 1964 drama from Daii featuring a recognizable Akira Irukuba score. Decent ninja action for its time, back when Japanese chanbara was still in it's "classic" phase. No English dubbing or subtitles, but something to do with

Tokugawa's reign and the attack on Oaske Castle. **

MAGIC OF THE NINJA (J)- Evil Skull Ninjas battle the superhero Lion Maru in this rarely seen English dubbing of LION MARU's pilot episode. ***

MAGIC SERPENT (J)- Dubbed in English & still shown on TV occasionally, this 1988 Toei fantasy introduced many of us to ninjas, while dazzling us with magic and giant monsters! The monster roars were supplied by Toho, sounding ridiculously familiar. Hiroki Matsukata as a righteous ninja out for revenge. ***

MASKED NINJA WITH A RED SHADOW (J)- Heroic Red Shadow (Yusuburo Sekaguchi) battles demons & giant monsters, with help from sidekick Blue Shadow (Yoshinobu Kaneko) in this 52-part kiddie series from 1986. **

MASTER [aka MASTER NINJA] (A)- Lee Van Cleef? Vince Van Patton? TV-made nirutsu from the early 1980s, the show was short-lived, despite Sho Kosugi's attempts to live things up as the villain. *

MIRAI NINJA (J)- It translates in English as "Future Ninja", also known as WARLORD. By the time you read this, there might be an American theatrical dub called CYBER NINJA. A spectacular superhero/ekki-thriller under any title! Beautiful FX and great battles abound! Monsters! Swordplay! *****

MISSION: IRON CASTLE (J)- Gamere regular Kajiro Hongo in another Daii film.

However, former Toei '60s star Hiroki Matsukata also appears in this 1970 movie I've yet to see, or review properly.

NIGHT OF THE NINJA (C)- Wei Ping Ao and other gangsters went a stolen diamond. Meanwhile, an American battles ninjas. Haven't we been here before?

9 1/2 NINJAS (A)- Bewilderingly terrible attempt to satirize erotic thrillers and ninjas. It fails miserably on both accounts, despite the lead actress's excellent boddy.

NINJA AND THE THREE SISTERS (J)- Shingo Yamashiro in a 1961 drama from Toei. Never seen it, but its Japanese title is NINJUTSU-TSUKAI TO SAN NIN MUSUME, which means "Ninja Master and the Three Sisters" (a more correct translation than the title).

NINE DEATHS OF THE NINJA (A)- Ninye Sho Kosugi and an American soldier tracking drug traffickers in the Philippines, encountering Americans, Arabs, Germans, sexy babes, and very few Filipinos. The fights, like the music, look like that of a TV movie, and it's nonstop stupidity from start-to-finish. From the beginning credits (Sho doing a "sword-dance" in the mist with female dancers) to its pointless, lackluster ending, this piece of shit has no logic, continuity, rationale, rhyme or reason, and has no reason for being. Sho's sons, Kane & Shane appear, they've been in about three of his films.

NINJA ACADEMY (A)- I'd say this silly farce



Let it nothing else, America's NINJA TURTLE movies, cartoons and comics, redefined the U.S.'s definition of a ninja. Are they Japanese assassins or intergalactic reptiles who eat pizza? That's the mystery of the ninja.

Right. Turtle. Burooka, TV's original Ninja Turtle? This villain (from KAMEN RIDER VS; 1972) wreaked havoc on Japanese TV long before Americans discovered how to make martial arts reptiles!



is better than POLICE ACADEMY, but that would be redundant, and I've never seen POLICE ACADEMY. NINJA ACADEMY is a goofy story of people learning ninjutsu for stupid reasons. Satirical characters from all walks of life encounter gags, breasts, and a climactic showdown with a rival ninja school. *

NINJA: AMERICAN WARRIOR (C) - A pretty detective, Amazonia, avenges Chi Kwan Chun's death, while a white hero has Vietnam flashbacks involving a Rutger Hauer wannabe. **

NINJA DEATH SQUAD (C) - Some yankee in a ninja gi, spliced into a cheap crime drama! How many more times am I going to have to say this? I just rented and watched this one, but have no memory of it!

NINJA DRAGON (C) - Blame Joseph Lai & Godfrey Ho for casting Richard Hemon (FOUR ASSASSINS, FIREBACK, BLOODY AVENGERS) as an American ninja. More random ninja fights, indiscriminately edited into a Shanghai gangster drama about guns, girls & gore.

e Jackie clone avenging his elderly master's death against Japanese ninjas. The 1983 actioner serves as a halfway point between genres, from 1970s chop sockey to Tsui Hark fantasies, so it's important historically. But I don't expect any of you jaded Hark freaks to see this influential movie, assholes. ***

NINJA MISSION (S) - Swedish ninja movie; Sweden is not known for its ninja movies, and NINJA MISSION shows why. Yet somewhat realistic and accurate for a ninja flick, as these ninja swedes prefer modern wea-



Animated version of Toei's KAMEN NO NINJA aka KAGE (Masked Ninja with a Red Shadow).

NINJA ARASHI (J) - A 1972 TV series about animal-ninjas way ahead of them damn turtles! Low budget, crude, talky, infantile, and yet entertaining. Our bird-like hero takes on demons, ninjas, mutants, Franksteins and anyone else he doesn't like. See bC#14. **

NINJA BUTAI GEKO (J) - Aussies know this early B&W 1960s series as "Phantom Agents," in its elusive English clubbing With Akira Yamaguchi and a catchy, James Bond-ish theme song, otherwise pretty dull. See OC#11. *

NINJA IN THE CLAWS OF THE CIA (C) - No ninjas, nor is there logic. Never liked John Liu, & this spy flick did little to change that. Liu fees corrupt CIA agents while boning every babe from Mexico to France. Bewilderingly stupid, but never dull! Nice kung fu kicks through out. *1/2

NINJA IN THE DRAGON'S DEN (C) - Hroyuki Sanada and Conan Lee team up to fight the bad guys. Not bad at all. **

NINJA KIDS (C) - No kids, plenty of fights, obscenities, brothels, & nudity. A chop sockey of the "drunken master" genre, with

pony like guns & time bombs. Despite an attractive female pop singer lead (upper nudity), it's a horrendously dull saga about agents battling the KGB. NINJA MISSION proves I'm no inosinnac.

NINJA'S EXTREME WEAPONS (C) - Thomas Tang must be stopped! Yet again he's spliced red, white & blue ninjas into a Thai gangster fiasco. Callen, a hero from SOUL OF BRUCE LEE stars, and an interesting twist is that the blue ninja, not the white one is the hero.

NINJA CYPTOR (J) - Toei again thrills

superhero fans in this 43-episode TV show about high-tech warriors battling magic ninjas, and starring KIKAIIDA's Desuke Ban ***

NINJA SQUAD (C)- Richard Harrison, in a colorful nins suit, again in a terrible gangster drama from Thailand or the Philippines. The multi colored ninjas all wear headbands which read 'NINJA' in big friendly letters! They're accessories from store-bought Halloween costumes! Music in this unintentional comedy would later appear in **HARDBOILED**, proving that even John Woo likes stock music

NINJA THE FINAL DUEL II (C)- Low budget Taiwanese masterpiece! Never saw part 1, but if it's anything like this sequel, it's a wild chop sockey/fantasy with ninjas, Shaolin monks, swordsmen, Caucasian heroes aiding the Chinese kung fuers, lemas, bronzemen, and 95% action! It wasn't until 45 minutes into this thriller that I realized it had no English translation of any kind (not much dialogue). ***

NINJA: THE PROTECTOR (C) - Joseph Lai again splices Caucasian ninja, Richard Harrison into a bad choice of a story! A HK sleaze film featuring a few decent laughs (i.e. Jackie Chan's name in the credits, unbeknownst to him).

NINJA TERMINATOR (C) - No ninjas, no Terminator. Instead, vengeful Chin Sing pursues Chen Hui Min in this early 1970s chop sockey tale with an urban setting. Too talky, despite occasional fights and T&A. *1/2

NINJA 3: THE DOMINATION (A)- Sho Kosugi isn't necessarily a bad fighter, but the film tries to go off **FLASHDANCE**, instead of being a good martial arts film. Something to do with an aerobics teacher possessed by a nins's ghost *

NINJA TURF (A)- No ninjas in this low budget tale of Chinese immigrants (Jun Chong, Phil Rhee) battling various gangs. Excellent fights are ruined by poor lighting (way too dark!) and a depressing ending. Bill Wallace cameo as a villain. **

NINJA WARLORD (C)- No ninjas, but plenty of evil Japanese and kung fu hero Chen Sing to the rescue. **

NINJA WARRIORS (A)- Not bad for a low budget movie, and looks like a HK cheapie. The sound FX are from Chinese films, but the fights are slower, though photographed better than average for a US production. Story deals with ninjas, kidnapping and a secret formula. **

NINJA WARS (J)- When I said Japan makes the best nins film, I hadn't seen this worthless heap of boredom from Toei. Sonny Chiba again plays a Yagyu nins

(minus the trademark eyepatch), and Hiroyuki Senada stars. A couple nice decorations, and inventive gimmicks, yet whoever wrote the period film's script must have been on acid. Bizarre, offbeat, overly talky Ultra garbage, makes me respect Dudikoff's films



An early nins from Japanese TV

NOBLE NINJA (C)- An early 1970s film influenced by 1960s period films, but with more polished sword fights. There's a team of mighty swordsmen, and Pai Ying plays a hero for once! Epic sword slaughter as our heroes Yuh Hwa & Pai Ying tear up the town! Lo Lish cameo, ninjas don't. ****

PHOENIX THE NINJA (C)- Pearl Chong in another delightful period movie, as she searches for her parents' murderer. The

dramatic duel between her and a bad monk takes place inside a volcano! Best of all, not a nins in sight! ***

PLOT OF THE YAGYU CLAN (J)- Yet another tale of Yagyu ninjas, from 1978

PREY FOR DEATH (A) - If you ever decide to watch a Sho Kosugi movie (and one is more than enough), make it this one. Brutal, gory, acrobatic, and a tale of Sho and his son Kane Kosugi (who'd later grow up to play the main hero in **ULTRAMAN: THE ULTIMATE HERO!** coming to America, only to get harassed by mobsters. Check out Sho's fancy headgear in the climactic free-for-all. That's what I call 'Sho & tell.' *1/2

RAGE OF A NINJA (C)- It's the old 'splinteroo' again, but at least THIS time, there really are ninjas, even in the original version! But that didn't stop Caucasians ninjas from getting edited in at random. These stupid yankees want us to know they're ninjas, so they too wear the 'Nins' headbands! The pink one is the hero! They all 'quick change' in a puff of smoke, one explodes, another turns into a frog! Dumb fun, and sexy babes too, in what is actually an erotic, romantic love story! Music seems to be stolen from some old New Order album. **

RENEGADE NINJA (J) - Hiroki Matsukata (hero of **MAGIC SERPENT**) plays the main good guy, Yorozyu Kinosuke (hero in **COZURE OKAMI TV** series) plays the bad guy, and Hiroyuki Senada, Shoji Kobayashi & Tetsuro Tanba appear. A Toei movie from 1979. All the makings of a fun film, right? Wrong! Even dubbed in English, this is a long, talky, confusing saga. One minute, there's a meteor crashing on Earth, and later, a castle flies in the air. Why? So much is unexplained, and there are way too many characters to keep track of, and the battles suck. *

REVENGE OF THE NINJA (A)- One of the USA's better attempts, which isn't saying much. Sho Kosugi and his son discover somebody is smuggling drugs in antiques. Actually, the whole film is more than similar to its 'semi-remake', **PRAY FOR DEATH**. *1/2

RETURN OF THE NINJA KIDS (C)- Ninjas no, kids yes, video-generated title yes, typical chop sockey yes, Jackie ripoff yes. *1/2

ROBOT NINJA (A)- Perhaps the worst movie ever made, made by people who don't know jackshit about ninjas or how to make a proper Japanese superhero. Some cheap, bad films are at least unintentionally funny, but not this super dull heap of crap, despite a cameo by Burt Ward

SAMURAI SPIY (J)- A 1965 effort from Schochiku, rarely seen outside of Japan, with Koy Takahashi and Tetsuro Tanba



The 'Space Ninjas' of the MESSAGE FROM SPACE TV series.

Features the famous ninja Sarutobi, a folk hero.

SASUKE AND HIS COMEDIANS (J) - [SANADA FUUNROKU] A 1963 directional from Tai Kato, from Toei, involving rebel ninjas of the Sanada clan. Ain't seen it.

SECRET AGENT SWORDSMAN (J) - [aka THE SEARCHING SWORDSMAN] Feature-length version of Australia's THE SAMURAI TV series, known in Japanese as ONIMITSU KENSHI. Cast: Koichi Goe, Jun Fujimaki, and Bin Amatsu, from Senkoshu Productions.

SHOGUN'S NINJA (J) - Though influenced by Chinese kung fu films, this Toei adventure maintains the usual boredom seen in other Japanese period films. But still, any fight involving Sonny Chiba, Hiroyuki Senada & Itsumo Shiori can't be all bad. *

SECRET OF THE FYFLOT (J) - Never mind, I haven't seen or heard of this Toei '68 tale, also called SHINOBI NO MANJI and MANJI OF THE ASSASSIN.

SNAKEFIST NINJA (C) - Cheaply, inaccurately retitled print of Jackie Chan's SNAKEFIST FIGHTER. No ninjas, and the video box says: "Starring Yackie Chan." **

STEEL FACES LURKING IN THE DARKNESS (J) - Junji Kurata directed Tomisaburo Wakayama in this Toei (1961) film, before going on to direct MASKED NINJA WITH A RED SHADOW six years later.

SUPER NINJAS (C) - Chang Cheh's epic slaughter fest. Nonstop swordplay, blood & guts as Chinese guys take on the Five

Element Ninjas. Wild stuff. ***

S U R F NINJA (A) - Rarely do I review a movie I've never seen, but in this case I'll make an exception.

TEEN-AGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES (A) - They started

out as comic books in the early 1980s, then became a cartoon. Their biggest hit was their three live action movies. I

hated the first one so much I avoided the remainder of the trilogy. As for the cartoon, I saw its feature-length pilot many years ago, and was relieved that the names of the weapons were pronounced correctly (none of this 'nunchuck', or 'chocko stick' bullshit). * 1/2

TENGU IN THE GALE (J) - aka HAUNTED SAMURAI, SUPERMAN OF THE GALE, & KAZE NO TENGU. Yet another Hideki

Takahashi ninja vehicle. A 1971 movie from Nikkatsu, and featuring up & coming K A M E N RIDER 2 Takashi Sakai.

ULTIMATE NINJA (C) - Them 'ninja' headbands sure get around, every ninja needs one! Bruce (DRAGON FORCE) Berman turn up at bat - I mean, up at sword, as a red ninja battling black ninjas over a

small ninja statue resembling a GI Joe doll. Meanwhile, in an unrelated event, Thai gangsters battle it out in forests & bamboo villages! Action packed with great dialogue: "Those prick! I'll get even, once I've learned kung fu!" Fights a' plenty, and Japanese superhero fans will recognize music taken from KAMEN RIDER SUPER 1. ***

UNMASKING THE IDOL (A) - Big budget adventure comedy, a silly spy story showing what would happen if James Bond were a ninja. Outlandish, most bordering on so-fu/fantasy. The fights are fairly good, as heroic ninjas battle red enemy ninjas at their island fortress. There's a hilarious beebone who steals the film! Stars Ian Hunter (no, not the one from Mott the Hoople). **

WARRIOR AND THE NINJA (J) - Ninjutsu meets Indian mythos in this gory, inventive fantasy from Jakarta, Indonesia! Its original title is BAJING IRENG DAN JAKA SEMBUNG and looks like The Jungle Book meets Five Deadly Venoms, and it's interesting how Indonesian period films combine Chinese & Middle Eastern cultures. The kung fu hero is none other than Barry Prima, who played Barney (dubbed like Elvis) in FEARLESS FEMALE FREEDOM FIGHTERS, proving that it too is Indonesian, NOT Filipino as I was told! The story is unique, despite obligatory Caucasian villains: it's all about this female assassin called the Black Sparrow, a ninja-like Robin Hood who helps Borneo Prima defeat foreign devils and swordsmen. Acrobatic! Minutiae! Clever! FX! Lots of fights! ***

WATARI-THE GRAND NINJA MOVIE (J) - (continued on page 26)

High-tech ninjas in NINJA CYCATOR.



HONG KONG HEROES: NEW AND OLD

In the sleazy/fresh fanzine community, reviews of current Chinese hits are as commonplace as dikes performing in professional women's Tennis. So I'm eliminating OC's short-lived column, MODERN HEROES OF HONG KONG, because it's too trendy. If every lame gorehound and degenerate is going to suddenly start writing about John Woo, Jackie Chan & Tsui Hark, I see no reason to contribute heavily to these overrated fads. There are Hong Kong film festivals and 'Hong Kong Night' at theaters all over the country; the genre has really taken off. Personally, I'll never again go into a domestic theater full of trendy art types, to see a HK movie. I'll stick to the Chinatown theaters, I'll take the Chinese audience over pretentious American trandies any day. But of course, OC won't completely ignore any genre, but for now, the new will share space with the old. This column combines CHOP SOCKEY REPORT with MODERN HEROES OF HONG KONG. Sure, I'll occasionally cover Tsui Hark & the likes, but I'll include the oldest too.

I like Chinese cinema from four different decades: the sword fantasies of the 1950s, the kung fu movies of the 1970s, the gangster dramas of the 1980s, and whatever is the new trend of the 1990s (a return to King Fu-inspired sword/fantasies, I suspect). Last issue I suspected that the 1990s trend in HK is a return to period fantasies. My more recent trips to Chinatown confirmed my disappointment. Used to be I'd go into Chinatown to see movies at random, whatever was playing; I'd seen genres come and go. But ever since ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA came out, that's all that seems to be playing! I'm the one human on Earth who dislikes that film (and many other Hark flicks), so unlike the rest of you, I've no interest in this overrated movie's assorted-sequels, remakes, spinoffs, prequels and ripoffs. Yet I enjoy going into Chinatown theaters, the subtitles are much more readable than on a videotape. So I'm force feeding myself the period fantasies of the 1950s. I'd rather watch a cops & gangster film, but that genre is dying out (possibly a political move, since cops and gangsters may become obsolete in 1987 when the Commies impose new threats). So off I go to Chinatown, choosing between different Huang Fei Hung movies, deciding which theater to go into to be bored.

On a recent trip, the Great Star was showing some porno film, and the World

Theater was showing a Huang Fei Hung ripoff, but its co-feature looked like a musical. So I chose the triad-owned Pagoda Theater, at least they were showing a couple of action fantasies: ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA IV (**) and THE WIFE WITH WHITE HAIR (**). I reluctantly coughed up my six bucks as I entered, miffed that I've seen ever film in the ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA series, and that, out of desperation will get stuck sitting through more. Part 4 confirms my suspicion of what the first movie did; it killed the kung fu film.

The kung fu genre really all started in the 1950s, thanks to old timers like Jimmy Wang Yu and Yueh Hwa. The kung fu film reached revolutionary new levels in the 1970s, thanks to Bruce Lee, Raymond Chow, Fu Shing and others. In the 1980s, the kung fu film again took on a new turn, and the fights and stunts reached their peak. Impossible to improve on the 1980s work, the 1990s adventures virtually ignore martial arts. Seems all the post-ONCE UPON A TIME IN CHINA farces prefer elaborate FX, suspension wires, trick photography, impossible feats, and over done acrobats over real kung fu. Ironically, these gimmicks were popular in the 1950s too, but back then, it was an excuse to hide the fact that the actors can't fight for shit! But what's the excuse for the 1990s films using this artsy tatlety stuff? Jet Li and Yuen Biao know how to fight! Their skills only occasionally shine out, amid the endless wire-FX and deceitful camera work.

Regardless, I took a dose of caffeine to keep me awake during the 4th chapter in this story of China's oldest, and most famous folk hero since the Monkey King; Huang Fei Hung. Among the endless dialogue & downing around seemed to be a simple story, but in typical Harkian style, it was made to look like a complex story, via endless rambling. Huang Fei Hung battles a group of female revolutionaries who kill foreign devils, even the innocent ones. Speaking of foreigners, there's this competitive 'lion dance', an arena where different teams get in huge animal costumes and props, which look like parade floats. In reality, I think only the Chinese performed in these large dragon, tiger and lion costumes. In this film it seems that rival countries, including Germany and America are doing it too! So various big dragons, monsters and animals (all made of wood and paper mache) dance around and battle it out, in what reminded me of the 'car wrestling'

episode of SPEED RACER. These humongous statue/costumes contain deadly weapons like swords and spears, to damage the animals & people of competing countries. One of these creatures roars like General. Regardless, thanks to Huang Fei Hung, the Chinese team wins, of course. Slightly better was its co-feature, THE WIFE WITH WHITE HAIR (**).

Like the Coming Attractions which preceded it, it's another ultra-typical costume drama. A magical fantasy more than similar to A CHINESE GHOST STORY, WIFE WITH WHITE HAIR tells the story of a swordsman who falls in love with the priestess of an evil cult. Our hero tries to free her of her involvement with these bizarre freaks, resulting in gore, a little swordplay, FX, acrobats and average fun.

Many of you horny, fat couch potatoes are asking for more info and shots of Hong Kong's many gorgeous actresses. So among the usual reviews of films, I'll include random biographies, to help you identify these babes of the East. The bios presented are based on info available, and are not in anyway related to the chosen film reviews. But if you're using photos as a substitute for getting a real girlfriend, I don't want to hear about it. Believe it or not, getting a girlfriend is not impossible, assuming you're willing to lose weight and clean yourself up. I for one have never gone to bed with an ugly girl. However, I've woken up with quite a few

SATANIC CRYSTALS

*Presented by Entertainment Ltd., 1988.
Director: Tommy Cheng. Producer: Della Yeung. Executive Producer: Thomas Tang. Starring: Lung Kai Yien (Lung Cha Jen), Fung Shui Chi, Cheng Tso, Cheng Kwei Yung, Shen Kwei Chi, Ng Man Tat, Sing Fui On, He Chi Chun, Yung Sai Kit, Suen Kin, Yi Chi Wai, George Nicholas, Christopher Kopper, Lim Lai Ying, Chung Suet Wing.*

So there I was, in a Chinese video store I hadn't visited in six pleasant, peaceful months. You see, I momentarily 'outgrew' Hong Kong films once somebody from ROLLING STONE wrote to me, requesting info on HK's newer films. If a magazine THAT mainstream is gonna write about HK flicks, I wanted nothing to do with them. But after a while, the addition returned, I needed my fix of HK action, overrated or not! But once in the store I couldn't decide what to rent. I knew damn sure I wouldn't touch anything with Jet Lee in it, or anything remotely

resembling CHINESE GHOST STORY. Jackie Chan is past his prime, Steven Chow is as funny as Jerry Lewis. So I managed to locate an obscure little adventure called SATANIC CRYSTALS.

I closed my eyes, put my hand on a row of tapes, and chose this one at random. Liang Chia Jen (spelled differently in the credits), who's been in THUNDERING MANTIS, FIVE MASTERS OF DEATH, TAK MOH: ORIGINATOR OF KUNG FU, and RED SHIELD, stars as a Chinese adventurer in search of rare jewels in Bangkok. He bungs cocks in Bangkok, fighting various soldiers, tribes and other villains, all after the so-called 'satanic' crystals (there's nothing satanic about them, it's all just another war/action movie). It has all the ingredients of a good adventure, gore, brutality, T&A, stunts, stabblings, kung fu, explosions, and more shoot outs than beads at a sci-fi convention. All this amounts to standard, average, two-star material. But then dick lickers forgot to add English subtitles! The credits are in English, proving they want non-Chinese to know all their names, but they don't care if we understand the story. Egomaniac!

ALL MEN ARE BROTHERS: BLOOD OF THE JAGUAR

Produced by Entertainment Co. in 1983. Starring Leung Ka Fai (Tony Leung, but not the one from BULLET IN THE HEAD), Joey Wong, Wu Ma.

I never thought I'd like a Tsui Hark-inspired, wee FX period film, not after ONCE

UPON A TIME IN CHINA PART 74, ONCE UPON A TIME IN HONG KONG, FUNG SAI YUK, or any other Huang Fei Hung fiasco! That's about as likely as finding a fanatical pro-lar who minds his own business. But since this title hints it might be

a decent, fairly amusing period film with epic production values, and ONLY ONCE did Joey Wong fight by using roles of streamlining toilet paper!

As you can tell from the title, it again involves mountain bandits, but concentrates

more on the governmental soldiers who fight them. It all starts when the general's snobby son is rescued from a bandit clan. Turns out he'd have been better off left in their cage, since once he's free, the egotistical son goes around using diplomatic immunity to get away with rape and harassment. A drunken monk and scholar/soldier prevent his drunken attacks on townsfolk, so he conspires with a rival soldier to treach our two heroes. Both are sent into exile, and plan to go join the patriotic mountain bandits. But back at the palace, Joey Wong's character (wife of the heroic swordsman) gets killed by the rich kid (a botched rape attempt, resulting in the inevitable duel).

There's blood, swordplay, high flying leaps, explosions, and impossible acrobats all achieved with suspension wires all through this battle, as well as the rest of this confusing, frequently dull story. My script may lack details, because I don't want to spend the rest of this life writing this article. Our two heroes win their fight, though they get screwed up pretty badly too."

RAPED BY AN ANGEL

[Chinese title: HO FA CHANG JEN, which means 'Legal Rape'] Producer: Wong Jing (AKA Wong Ching), Director: Liu

ニナ・リー
NINA LEE /利智
aka **NINA LI CHIH**

Year of birth: 1965
Place of birth: Shanghai
Educated in HK, England, and San Francisco, Nina Li Chih later won a beauty contest in HK, starting her film career.

ACES GO PLACES 5: THE TERRACOTTA HIT ('86)***
CRIMINAL HUNTER ('87)
FEDICAB DRIVER ('88)**
CHINESE GHOST STORY 3 ('91)**1/2
DRAGON FROM RUSSIA ('90)*****
TIGER ON BEAT ('88)***
PROFILES OF PLEASURE ('86)*



Below: Nina Li Chih (middle), with Pauline Wong (left), and Celine Lu (right) in the cast of PROFILES OF PLEASURE (1986)



related to the old novel "The Water Margin," related to 7 BLOWS OF THE DRAGON, I thought I'd give it a try. So I got plenty of caffeine in my system (Hark-ish films require consciousness and accuracy to follow the chaotic stories), and entered the Great Star, Chinatown's filthiest theater. What I saw was

Wai Chung, Presented By Wong Jing's Workshop, Ltd., Cast Cho Su Chien, Yin Dai Hua (Simon Yam), Wu Shieh Ling, Dang Hui Nahn

Normally I avoid erotic thrillers like a politician avoids giving a direct answer, but since the ads showed a sexy girl with a crossbow [hence this issue's cover, though she never looks like that in the film itself] I expected an action film. Granted, there are a couple of fights, like Simon Yam fighting off a gang of mobsters in a salon and on a city street. But there's much more sleaze and sex, almost reaching porno status. No doubt the hard-up oriental-trash fans will drool (and emit other bodily excretions) over this bizarre, low budget tale. I've got an 'exploitation' streak in me, but my favorite thing about **RAPED BY AN ANGEL** wasn't the babes & blood, but the disturbing intelligence of the villainous rapist, played by the guy from **ESCAPE FROM CORAL COVE** (as a zombie) and **ABRA-CADABRA** (store clerk). The character, though ruthless, deranged & incredibly perverted, comes off as frighteningly intelligent. Simon Yam, playing a happy-go-lucky mad, steals the film though.

The villain is a lawyer who prefers rape over wife sex, even if he has a gorgeous girlfriend, then sex is mock rapes, he always handcuffs her and other babes before they do the old tuna treat. His videotape his partners being raped, lets his friends get some snitch, and even provides a cheap thrill for a local reterd, oil at the

expense of unwilling females. His luck changes when he goes after a couple TV models. One he accidentally kills during a struggle, so he cuts her body up and sticks the pieces in a tub of acid [fairly graphic]. However, the surviving model (I think the

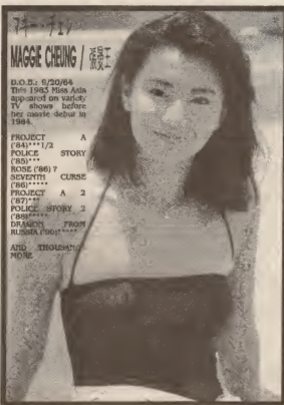
from the police station [the kinky lawyer framed him] and beats the crap out of the villain. The model kicks him in the balls before the police arrive ***

RETURN OF THE CHINESE BOXER

Presented by Cheng Ming Film Co. in 1974, Producer Jimmy Wong Yu, Executive Producer Tsai Yi Ming, Production Manager: Cheng Shiao Yin, Action Dir: Hsieh Hsing, Cameraman: Chou Yao Xu, Lighting: Ah Ping, Asst. Dir: Chan Wuen Pin, Huang Chang Kung, Screenplay: Ko Lung, Director: Jimmy Wong Yu, Starring: Jimmy Wong Yu, Lung Fei, Chung Ying Chen, Chin Kang, Cheng Chih Min

I suppose it's very prejudiced presumptuous of me, but I expected this to be a sequel to Wang Yu's (Jimmy Wong Yu) in the credits) earlier ground breaker, **THE CHINESE BOXER** (see OC#14). What was I thinking? Just because it's called **RETURN OF THE CHINESE BOXER**, I expected for a sequel? How unreasonable of me! This is a period film where men have ponytails, so it's set well before **CHINESE BOXER**.

RETURN is an unusual adventure, it definitely offers some surprises and unique ideas. The Japanese villains aren't portrayed as evil; no raping, racism or harassment (in fact, it's the Chinese who attack THEM first). There are, however, way too many characters, there are endless challenges and duels between a wide variety of martial artists, kung fu masters, samurai's, a judo expert, gunslingers



actress's name might be Cho Su Chien) happens to be dating a mobster-with-a-heart-of-gold, Simon Yam. When the rapist tries to 'poke' her at her apartment, he ends up getting a substitute, a girl with AIDS! It was all a trap, the AIDS victim was a friend of the model. By this time, Simon Yam arrives

glore, a female ninja (ninja?), zombies and even a couple Thai Boxers (their attire is Thai, but their technique is too fleshy and acrobatic to be genuine Thai boxing). Regardless, Wang Yu's battle with these two is the highlight of the film: There's plenty of wacky feats and ninja-like gimmicks as the mysterious Sau Pai Lung (Wang Yu) pops in at the nick of time, to rescue Chinese soldiers from assorted villains, Japanese and otherwise. Though dubbed in "but still" English, the story's abnormal approach is too hard to follow and not get a headache. Since I value my health more than I value your business, let's just say that there are plenty of interesting confrontations before Sau Pai Lung battles his toughest adversary: a samurai/fit-man who's mastered: karate, sword-play, the kama, chain-whips and guplay! So Sau must outsmart this Japanese sherp-shooter, and leads him into a building full of mannequins and puppets, all made to look like our hero! The kerate gunman wastes all his ammunition on these replicas! So Sau jumps him, and after another kung fu fight, picks up what looks like a pitchfork, but is actually a powerful gun, and blasts his rival away! Interesting climax to a kung fu film; that makes it an interesting kung fu film!***

MR. CANTON & LADY ROSE

(aka MIRACLE) Presented by Golden Harvest in 1989. Producer Raymond Chow. Cast Jackie Chan, Anita Mui, Tung Po (aka Tung Po) and Bill Tung, Wu Ma, Lo Lieh, Richard Ng, Alex, John Cheung, Jackie

Cheung, Yuen Pao, Amy Yip

In 1987 or 1988, when Jackie Chan was in San Francisco, he mentioned he was making a remake of an American film he loved as a kid; but wouldn't tell us which one. Of course, my knowledge of American

drama, in order to figure out what the hell MR. CANTON & LADY ROSE is all about. It's over two hours long (that's one and a half hours too many), and with subtitles cropped at the ends: it's a very unpleasant experience. The fact that a props technician

did falling from a huge set) during pre-production makes this disappointing production all the more painful to sit through. Fortunately, there are a few decent, comedic gags (i.e. Jackie running around while stuck in a basket), and its fights and stunts are great. However, this romp marked a transition for Jackie, no longer will we see the action extravaganza like those which preceded it (DRAGONS FOREVER and POLICE STORY 2 were his last thrilling classics), the movie represents his aging, his softening process. Its fights concentrate less on kung fu stunts, and more on acrobats, and creative use of objects at hand. My god! The ideas he comes up with! Some of these stunts are not only brilliant, but dangerous. These scenes alone plus a five-second cameo by Amy Yip in top form (3), make an otherwise disappointing movie worth checking out. But as I wrote this, I

films rivals my knowledge of Lithuanian folk music, so I didn't rack my brain for an answer. Well, it turned out to be some old gangster film directed by Frank Capra, whoever THAT is (maybe they mean Frank Zappa?), called POCKET FULL OF MIRACLES. Ma he'll have to see this American

watched my 'condensed' version of the movie, which lacks much of the drama, possibly a whole hour removed. I think it's better this way. Had I viewed the long, uncut print I saw in the theater a few years back, this would have been a hateful, scathing review.

サリー・イップ SALLY YEH / 葉倩文

(aka SALLY YIP)

D.O.B. Sept. 30, 1961.
Raised partially in Canada, she returned to HK in the early 1980s, making her movie debut in 1982.

MR. BOO! ('82)
THE OCCUPANT ('84)*
WELCOME ('85)
ACES GO PLACES 4 ('86)***
PEKING OPERA BLUES ('86)
ROBOT FORCE/I LOVE MARIA ('88)*
THE KILLER ('89)***



Set in 1930s HK, Kuo Cheng Wah (Jackie Chan), an out-of-work laborer purchases a series of 'lucky flowers' from some old lady. His luck changes, and he unwittingly becomes involved with some mobsters. Treated well and quickly promoted, he develops a rivalry with a jealous mobster, Lo Lih (oldtimer from **FIVE FINGERS OF DEATH**, which you already knew). In a subplot, Anita Mui and her golden voice sing about roses in a nightclub called the Ritz.

What else happens? Uh, oh yeah, the flower peddler is poor and lower class, so Jackie feels bad about it. Then that jealous Lo Lih frames Jackie, passing off rival mobster Tiger, who's had his eye on the Ritz. Something else probably happens, and then there's a fight in a warehouse full of ropes, huge spoils, ladders and pulleys! Great climax! Or is it? Nope, this film is like that Energizer rabbit: it just keeps going and going, and going. The short remainder of the film isn't a fight, but some wimpyhearted tear jerker, as the gangsters all forgive each other. One more thing, they all live happily ever after ***1/2

LUNG WEI VILLAGE

Executive Producer, YC Tan Producer Ho Mei Tung, Cameramen Shu To Li. Starring: Polly Sham Kwan, Yao Hwa, Lo Lih

Bzzzz! This is the strangest chop socky farce I've ever seen! It's all very Chinese, so it comes off as awkward when dubbed into English. Things really get confusing and offbeat, something was definitely

lost in the translation. I guess this movie is an overdone spoof of Chinese culture and tradition, so all the dialogue is overly lyrical, traditional post-Peking opera stuff, so in English, it sounds corny and stupid.

Speaking of stupid, that sums up this

アニタ・ムイ
ANITA MUI / 梅艷芳
(aka Anita Mei)

She's been involved in showbiz her whole life, even as a child she appeared in movies and classical Chinese operas. Her musical career really took off in 1982. Her first real claim to fame as an actress happened two years later. She made headlines a while back when she, like so many other HK superstars, was hassled by triads. To date, she's been in numerous movies, including:

ROUGE ('88)
A BETTER TOMORROW PT 3 ('89)*
MR. CANTON & LADY ROSE ('88)***



whole stupid movie. It's silly, corny, far-fetched as hell, and ridiculous. However, it's entertaining, so that makes its morality forgivable. There are plenty of fights, and done very well. It's a funny tale too, the antics are somewhat amusing. Whatever narcotic the director and writer were on, it's

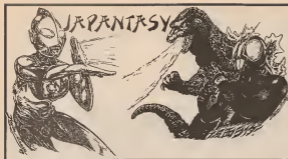
safe to assume nobody should drive, operate hazardous machinery or engage in conversation while on the stuff. It's got an interesting cast: Yueh Hua, Shangkuan Lin-fang, and even Lo Lih playing a hero! Yueh Hua, spelled Yao Hwa, was a hero in 1960s

period films like **THE MONKEY** and **COME DRINK WITH ME**. He managed to survive in the 1970s too, in kung fu movies like this one, **7 BLOWS OF THE DRAGON**, **MONKEY KUNG FU**, and 1972's **PAYMENT IN BLOOD**, an urban modern crime drama I'm dying to see. He finally fizzled out to 'has been status' in the 1980s, he was only in one film I know of, **IN THE LINE OF DUTY 3**. Regardless, he's had an interesting career. Anybody have any info on the guy?

Shangkuan Lin-fang, also called something else in this movie, is also a product of period fantasies. This gorgeous actress is an excellent martial artist, but there's all I know about her. Again, any info would be appreciated.

Now's the painful part of this review, I'm dreading this! Man, this script is weirder than a William S. Burroughs novel. Lo Lih, Yueh Hua and Shangkuan Lin-fang are after a Ching revivalist and murderer called Chu Er Ming. Shangkuan supposedly dresses as a man through out this film. This overdone Chinese tradition is ridiculous, a mere hat doesn't make her look remotely masculine, especially when she cakes on a ton of makeup which

(continued on page 26)



Because space is more scarce than a shell in a salt factory, this column combines two previous columns, **TERROR YAKI** and **KAIZO NINGEN UPDATE**. In this column, **JAPANTASY**, I'll try to include as many Japanese monsters, heroes and cartoons as I have time for. This column is experimental, it may not return next issue. Before we get into our reviews, here are a couple updates:

ULTRAMAN news: Ultracom, the U.S. branch of the Tsubureya Company, is releasing **ULTRAMAN: THE ULTIMATE HERO**. Filmed in LA, it's the first Ultra series produced in the U.S. and promises to be better than Australia's **ULTRAMAN: TOWARDS THE FUTURE**. But then, crab lice is more fun than **ULTRAMAN: TOWARDS THE FUTURE**. However, I still tend to prefer the older Ultra program's, this column's obligatory Ultra review is 1973's **ULTRAMAN TARO**, a blast from the past!

GODZILLA news: Okay, I know! Enough already! Shut your fucking mouth! Every newly informed geek seems to want to tell me all about the upcoming American Godzilla flick from TriStar Pictures! Some say Tim Burton will direct, others say it's Terry Gilliam. I really couldn't care less if that's not annoying enough, some people are finally talking about 1999's **GODZILLA VS. BIOLLANTE**, because it eventually got dubbed into English. Look, you morons! It's old news! Open your eyes, there's more to life than what Blockbuster Video as to offer (**BIOLLANTE** has been available from Japanese stores and sleazy bootleggers for years). In other Godzilla hype, remember a couple years back when 1991's **GODZILLA VS. GHIDORAH** made U.S. headlines because of its supposed 'anti-American' commentary? Well, here more recent remakes, like **GODZILLA VS. MOTHIRA** (Toho: 1992) and **GODZILLA VS. MECHA-**

GODZILLA (Toho: 1993) gotten the same publicity? Nope, both are virtually unknown in U.S. news. To maintain fame, I suggest that Toho make a movie called **GODZILLA VS. THOSE BLOOD THIRSTY, BIG-NOSED YANKEE BARBARIAN ASSHOLES**. But enough on current topics, since for this issue, we'll go back to 1972, to get a load of an older classic, **GODZILLA VS. GIGAN**.

TOEI SUPERHERO news: As I write this in August 1992, the current live action superheroes airing on Tokyo's TV Asahi are **JAN PERSON** (another **ROBOCOP** wannabe, but more on that next issue) and **DAI RANGER**. **DAI RANGER** is the latest *Sentai* (superhero team), not unlike the previous season's **JYU RANGER** (see OC#14), which has degenerated into America's own **UGHTY MORPHING POWER RANGERS** (reviewed in this issue). **DAI RANGER**, **JYU RANGER**, and the slightly older **TURBO RANGER** are all basically the same series under different titles.

ウルトラマンタロウ

ULTRAMAN TARO

Produced by Tsubureya Productions in 1973, Broadcast on the Tokyo Broadcasting Service (TBS) from 4/6/73 to 4/6/74, consisting of 53 episodes, Main Writer: Shigemitsu Taguchi, Directed by Eizo Yamaguchi, Music: Masanobu Higure, Starring Saburo Shimoda

ULTRAMAN TARO, the 5th **ULTRAMAN** sequel, turned out not to be quite as inferior as I said it was in OC#9, a few years ago I was somehow of the impression that



Ultraman Taro (third from the right) and the other Ultra Brothers mourn their father's death.



Ultraman Taro and Ultra Mother care for an injured Zofy.

this was an incredibly childish program, but it seems I've been jaded. I expected something incredibly infantile when I recently watched the pilot episode for the first time. What I found was an entertaining 30 minutes, the fact that it was all in Japanese didn't make it boring, because it's fast paced with plenty of action. So I'll review this sci-fi series once more, now that I'm a little more familiar with it. For once, when reviewing this series, I know what the hell I'm talking about. Perhaps it was later in the show that the real newness set in since I have no complaints for this one. What follows is my review of the first episode. In future issues, I may critique other episodes of **ULTRAMAN TARO**, or maybe other Ultra programs.

Episode #1 Our heroic Kotaro (Saburo Shinoda) didn't quite get along with the Z.A.T., this program's Science Patrol clones. Spunky Kotaro had just gotten out of the manne when tragedy struck: Two humongous monsters, Oil Drinker and Astromonsu appeared! Not only did they battle each other, but destroyed a whole city as well. Kotaro's bravery in pursuing the monster



neerly got him killed, but it gained the respect of them futuristic soldiers, ZAT, who he'd previously brawled with. By the time one monster (a mutated dinosaur with a hungry flower on its stomach) ate the other, it's been revealed that Kotaro is actually descended from them metallic giants from outer space, the Ultra Brothers! So not only has he joined ZAT, but his secret identity as Ultraman Taro makes him all the more important. It ends after Taro kills Astromonsu. The climax' though repeated many



times before and since, is the usual Ultra excellence as Ultraman Taro battles the destructive monster, using the usual lasers, explosions and martial arts/wrestling tactics.

The FX, like miniatures and super-impositions are outstanding; the only laughable things being the monsters. However, this is forgivable. Them Tsuburaya dudes are to be commended for at least being able to create these outrageous costumes on a weekly basis (sometimes two monsters a week!). These suits may not be realistic, but there's no such thing as a realistic monster, they're denizens of fantasy, not reality. There's no point in whining about a cheap-looking Ultra monster, not so long as the monsters of DR. WHO were!

But my only gripe against the first episode of **ULTRAMAN TARO** is we see very little of the other Ultra Brothers: only brief glimpses of Zofy, Ultraseven, Ultraman Jack, Ultraman Ace, and of course, Ultraman himself. Ultra Mother appears too, as out-of-proportion as always. Who's in that costume? Kiten Natividad, maybe? One last thing, I believe ZAT stands for "Zarba of All Territory", and I sure as hell don't know what a "Zarba" is!!!!

宇宙からのメッセージ

MESSAGE FROM SPACE

1978, a joint production of Toei Company, Ltd. & Tohokushinsha Film Co. Ltd., Dir. Kingi Fukasaku, Producers: Bengoro Uemura, Yoshinori Watanabe, Tan Takamori, Created by Shotaro Ishinomori, Masahiro Noda, Kingi Fukasaku, Screenplay: Hiroo

Matsuda, Dir. of Photography: Toru Reikajima, Music Composed by Ken-Ichiro Monoki, Music Performed by Columbia's Symphony Orchestra (Japan), Science Fiction Supervisor Masahiro Noda, Space-flying objects designed by Shotaro Ishinomori, Special photographic effects: Minoru Nakano, Art Director: Tatsuro Otsawa, CAST, Vic Morrow, Sonny Chiba, Philip Canino, Peggy Lee Brennan, Etsuko Shironi, Tatsuro Tanaka, Mikio Narita, Makoto Sato, Hiroyuki Sanada, Isamu Shinzaki, Masasumi Okabe, Noburo

Matsu, Hiroshi Amamoto, running time: 105 minutes.

Yep, it's got its moments of silliness and stupidity, but looking back on it, it's enjoyable. Like other space Fantasies of the 1970s, it owes plenty to STAR WARS. I do, however, dispute the criticisms of critics, it's not a complete ripoff! MESSAGE is based on the old story SATOMI HAKENDEN (known in America as LEGEND OF THE EIGHT SAMURAI, with many of the same cast members), an influential novel which inspired the basic concept used in SEVEN SAMURAI, STAR WARS, and of course, MESSAGE. George Lucas got plenty of ideas from Japanese films and TV, so both STAR WARS and MESSAGE have the same ancient Japanese roots. As far as similarities to STAR WARS, BATTLESTAR GALACTICA, etc., my only grudge is its symphonic score. Over used, and trying too hard to sound like the STAR WARS theme. I actually prefer MESSAGE over STAR WARS (no big surprise, coming from me); because it's more colorful, the sets and costumes are more imaginative. But ignoring its similarities to STAR WARS and the whole outer space genre of the 1970s, I think on its own, it's a fun combination of fantasy, camp and action, and yet I dare say portions are intelligently written.

Beyond a doubt, the best production values are its special effects, no complaints about its miniatures, pyros or super impositions. Contrary to complaints by anti-Japanese movie critics, this film sure as hell is NOT cheap! They put a lot of work into these sets and FX! of course, this is from Toei, the world's superhero perfectionists,

who used the technology they'd later apply to their TV shows. In fact this movie spawned a sequel, the exciting MESSAGE FROM SPACE TV show (edited together to form a movie for English release, as either SWORDS OF THE SPACE ARK or SPACE NINJAS; unfortunately, I've never seen them!). The series features the return of



Kunoj, she's an evil Gavana warrior



Godzilla and Gigan battle it out.

Hiroyuki Senada, also in this original movie

Hiroyuki Senada ('Duke Senada' or 'Henry Senada' to dumb fucks who know little about Japanese films) isn't the only J.A.C. member in this film, there's Etsuko Shiomi, and JAC founder-himself, Sonny Chiba! By now, I assume you all know what JAC is, it's not like I've never written about them before. If you STILL don't know about JAC, read OG#14 again, stupid. Unfortunately, these three JAC superstars do none of the karate they're known for.

Other Japanese co-stars include Mekoto Sato and Tetsuro Tanba. But Toei wanted international sales, so they hired some guy called Philip Canoff, Peggy Lee Brennan (from an episode of MASH) and Vic Morrow, a few years before he had that fateful meeting with a helicopter blade. Morrow's performance is serious and logical, while the other two yankees play happy-go-lucky party animals, always saying 'yay & hurry,' and jumping up and down hugging each other. Through no fault of their own, they both make asses of themselves. Speaking of which, does Peggy Lee Brennan have a decent boddy under that space outfit? In the scene where she danced, it made me wish her costume was tighter. Her dingy character is annoying, but she's much worse in the Japanese version. I cringed every time she spoke dubbed in an awful Japanese voice, sounding like a 10 year old.

Storywise, there are these metallic Wikings out in space who've destroyed the planet Jiluca. Two survivors, played by Mekoto Sato and Etsuko Shiomi, go into space in search of avenging heroes. They're guided by magical 'lobo seeds'. They're fucking walnuts! What idiotic FX writer made this decision? With all these epic production values, couldn't they afford to design some-

thing more original? The only real nut is the director.

Regardless, these Lobo Walnuts fly around in search of venous different heroes played by Philip Canoff, Vic Morrow, Peggy Lee Brennan Sonny Chiba, and Hiroyuki Senada. So our various heroes, from different walks of life are off to battle the Gavana empire, who are now eyeing the Earth as their next conquest. With the help of the nuts, it's the nuts of the Gavanes which got kicked.

The climactic battle is, of course, very STAR WARS-ish. The scene of the space ships going through tunnels to blast the main generator is a quick steel. But amid the explosions, space battles and ray guns, Sonny Chiba's sword play stands out. He single handedly defeats a group of Gavanas, before his dual to the death with the Gavanas leader, who (of course) killed his parents. It ends happily ever after, until the TV show took over, showing the battles of the Next Generation***

ゴジラ対ガイガン

GODZILLA VS. GIGAN

Produced by Toho Movie Co. in 1972, released to America by New World Pictures in 1978 as GODZILLA ON MONSTER ISLAND, released on video by New World Video in 1988, Executive Producer: Tomoyuki Tanaka, Screenplay: Shiroshi Sakurawa, Dir. of Photography: Kiyoshi Hasegawa, Music: Akira Kikube, Dir. Jun Fukuda, Dir. of Special Effects: Teruyoshi Nakano, Starring: Hiroshi Ishikawa Minoru Takeshima, Kuno Mura, Tamako Umeda.

"They want peace," "we want peace"



bars Lynn, in two different kimonos, as she appears in 74's **GODZILLA VS. MECH-GODZILLA**, not **GIGAN**!

Yet my minor gripes and petty complaints die like nicotine addicts when the stunning image of Godzilla appears on the screen. Sure, some serious geeks complained that Godzilla's 1970s adventures are kiddie films, and yet many of these same dorky hypocrites enjoy Disney's cartoon 'classics' and **THE SIMPSONS**. To me, **GODZILLA ON MONSTER ISLAND** is not a kiddie film, but an average science fiction thriller. This 1972 Godzilla, and sidekick Angilas have more heart and personality than the creatures in more recent, stale, generic, bastardized Godzilla movies (anything after **TERROR OF**

say the film's characters. I must say, the only peace I wanted was a piece of the lead heroine's ass! The character was also supposedly a black belt in karate. Of course, the Tokyo films of 1972 and before weren't known for their martial arts (the only movie makers who knew anything about martial arts in 1972 were the Chinese), so the two 'karate' fights are little more than dumb chops reminiscent of Don Knott's work in **THE GHOST & MR. CHICKEN**. Of course, **GODZILLA VS. GIGAN** is not a karate film, but its other human characters are pretty stupid too. Attempts at comedy which fall flat on their faces. But still, the story is somewhat interesting, and it's nice to finally hear the lead character say "You're a hard bitch!" This was censored from the version I saw as a kid in the 1970s, at some matinee. The English dubbing isn't great, like when they refer to a place called 'Yamanoishi.' I don't think there's such a place. It's actually a district called Yamano C, so the dubbing is a translation error (C is pronounced 'shi' by them Japanese). But if you can find it, get the English tape released by New World Video. It's uncut, unlike the cut version, **GODZILLA ON MONSTER ISLAND** (an early re-telling). New World Video's only real flaw is putting two priestesses on the box cover! They're actually the same girl, Bar-

MEGHAGODZILLA). It's the film's human characters who seem stupid, while Godzilla and Angilas know what they're doing, stealing the film. Godzilla and Angilas are well matched, more so than Godzilla's team up with Jet Jaguar and King Caesar. It's rather odd to see our two reptilian heroes speak English though (in the Japanese version, their conversation is translated by word bubbles, like in comic books). The main problem is Ghidrah, he moves too slow, and his miniature (flying model) is completely still. Then when it cuts to stock footage of him in 1985's **GHIDRAH THE 3-HEADED MONSTER** (aka **GODZILLA VS. GHIDRAH**), he's suddenly moving quickly. The stock footage gets pretty annoying, scenes from **GHIDRAH**, **GODZILLA VS. SMOG MONSTER: WAR OF THE GARGANTUAS** and **DESTROY ALL MONSTERS** are easily recognizable.

The story swipes too much from **DESTROY ALL MONSTERS**, again, alien invaders control giant monsters so as to conquer the world. Only this time, they're mutant cockroaches from outer space, Nabule M' Spacehunter. Anyone who saw **THE DAY AFTER** knows only cockroaches can live through pollution and nuclear attack. So these super smart roaches, whose planet was destroyed by humanoid

oppressors, are taking it out on us Earthlings! Disguised as Japanese people, they're on Earth, creating a high-tech army base disguised as an amusement park. Among other futuristic structures, there's a central headquarters called the 'Godzilla Tower,' which resembles Metteli's Godzilla Shogun Warrior from the 1970s. Their faction signal tape, containing a type of sonar, summons destructive monsters who'll do their dirty work. But these two humongous aliens, Ghidrah and Gigan (his debut) are confronted by reptilian Earthlings Godzilla & Angilas! They swim from Monster Island and to Japan could have been better if Toho's only waterproof Godzilla suit hadn't looked so much different than the one used in the rest of the film. After more mumbo jumbo, like comic artist Geingo investigating the disguised cockroaches, all four monsters eventually clash. This is normally the high point of a Godzilla movie, but in this case, the monster battles are dull. The whole thing is slow-paced, a little too dark, and it drags. Regardless, there are a couple scenes of scurrying blood (again cut from the G Rated print I saw as a twerp), and the efforts of Godzilla and Angilas are touching. All the FX, be it explosive pyros or superimposed lasers are impressive. The aliens die in a fiery explosion devised by the human heroes, and then Godzilla & Angilas drive Ghidrah and Gigan back into space. The fights aren't great, but I can see why the 1970s Godzilla was considered a superhero. I don't mean that in a negative way, he's a hero and a damn good one. Even now, I get all teary-eyed (fears of joy) as Godzilla and Angilas swim off into the sunset, accompanied by a charismatic balled **GODZILLA VS. GIGAN** is the Godzilla equivalent of spaghetti westerns.***

仮面ライダーV3
vs
デストロン怪人
閃電騎士V3
vs
FRANKENSTEIN'S KUNG FU MONSTER

Ein Film Der Adles Film und TV Produktion, und Associationshiki Vawerth Ton Heing Films, Komrade. German version taken from China's SUPER RIDER V3 WITH THE DEVIL, which in turn is actually a re-cut from Japan's KAMEN RIDER V3. Presented in China by Tong Heng Film Co., Presented in Japan by Toei Co. and TV Asahi, Directed by Chong Guan Lin, Starring Tong Hai Weng and Chen Chen Weng.

KAMEN RIDER V3 (Toei, 1973) was one of the most popular Japanese superhero TV shows since **ULTRAMAN**, so it



Above: Kamen Rider V3 on his motorcycle, Hurricane.

Below: L to R, Kamen Rider 1, Kamen Rider V3 and Kamen Rider 2.



came as no surprise when the likes of KAMEN RIDER V3 and the original KAMEN RIDER were bought for Chinese audiences by Tong Hsing Film Co., for release in HK and Taiwan. These TV shows were edited into movies like SUPER RIDERS WITH THE DEVIL (see OCa #9 & #14). Its sequel, SUPER RIDER V3 WITH THE DEVIL, later reached a third nationality. German! Das is wunderbar, no? The title in Germany, FRANKENSTEINS KUNG FU MONSTER, is another example of kung fu ineptitude. They call YONGARI (a Korean film) GODZILLA'S TODESPRANKE, and their title for GODZILLA VS. GIGAN is FRANKENSTEINS HOLLENBRUT. Those Germans never could get their names or titles right! Jys, das is wärry stupidachky, komrad! But you will enjoy dees movie, komrad!

To American fans, the first sign of this film came in April, 1977, when FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND #133 had a few photos from it, but no real information. It took the VHS revolution of the 1980s to finally familiarize us with the Japanese/Chinese/German film. I've been a Kamen Rider fan most of my life. KAMEN RIDER, KAMEN RIDER V3, KAMEN RIDER X and the others are all influential, great programs. So naturally, I was happier than a dork at a slumber party when I finally got my greedy paws on this illustrious film! Most of its fights are from the Japanese theatrical feature, KAMEN RIDER V3 VS. DESTRON (see OCa #9) but the footage of Japanese actors was cut out, no more Hiroshi Miyauchi. In his place, is some Chinese guy, playing the newly named "Super Rider V3". Regardless of whether the characters are Japanese or Chinese, it's all dubbed in German. There are also some fights performed by a Chinese stunt crew. They're using the same costumes as the Japanese but the Chinese have their own additional characters: One is the same sphinx lady from the previous movie, and the other is a warrior, a cross between a Viking, samurai, demon and cyborg. The difference in Japanese karate choreography and Chinese kung fu

choreography becomes evident, as it did in the first film. One strange thing is that the Japanese superhero Ridermen is a female in this Chinese adaptation! It's still the late Akira Yamaguchi under the Riderman costume, despite the female voice. Speaking of voices, I'm still not used to hearing the Kamen Riders speak German! It was hard enough hearing them speak Chinese for the first time. I'll stick to "Henshin!", rather than "Achtung!"

There's a strange theme song not present in any original Japanese Kamen Rider series or movie. It's mostly whistling, and probably added by the Chinese. However, it does remind me of German beer drinking music, so who knows where it came from? Otherwise, most of the music is from Toei's original episodes.

As for the story, I don't speak German, I'm far more familiar with Japanese and Chinese. So I can't follow the story too well. Fortunately, the story is the same as that for KAMEN RIDER VS. DESTRON, including our hero's attack on the island base. The only real difference are the names of the villains: ... Japan: Destron, China: Devil, Germany: Frankenstein. So forget the story: all you need to know is who's good, who's bad, and that the four Kamen Riders (1, 2, V3, and Riderwoman) can jump, flip, ride motorcycles and defeat dozens of monsters and henchmen!****

恐竜戦隊ジュウレンジャー

MIGHTY MORPHIN' POWER RANGERS

Co-Producer: Ellen Levy Samoil, Supervising Producers: Winston Richard, Tony Oliver, Producers: Ronnie Hedlin, Jonathon Taylor, Casting: Katy Wallin, Production Designer: Yude Aka. Released by Renaissance Atlantic Entertainment, in Association with MMPRI Productions Inc., and Saban Entertainment, produced in Japan by Toei Ltd., CAST: Austin St. John as Jason, Thuy Trang as Trini, Walter Jones as Zack, Amy



The heroic POWER RANGERS, L to R: Trini Ranger, Pink Ranger, Dragon Ranger (a temporary character), Tiger Ranger and Monomoth Ranger



Jo Johnson as Kimberly, David Yost as Billy, also featuring Paul Scher, Jason Nerry, David Fielding, Machiko Soba.

First of all, the original ZYU RANGERS (pronounced "Jew Rangers") aired in Japan in 1982, as reported in CC#14. I assume "Zyu" is their interpretation of "Zoo", as in Zoology (hence the dinosaurs). So a year later, that over rated, ultra-typical hunk of crap JURASSIC PARK generates "dino mania" in America, so, for the first time since the 1987 bastardization of DYNAMAN (Toei, 1983) on NIGHTFLIGHT, a Toei Serial comes to America. ZYU RANGER became America's POWER RANGERS at an ironic time when protests against violence on kiddie TV were widespread in the news. It still surprises me to see live action martial arts on children's TV. No doubt the FTC and FCC will moan, groan, whine and complain about this. So I say, "fuck off," if you don't like it, don't watch it! POWER RANGERS is the best thing on American TV since the old days of ULTRAMAN or SPECTREMAN!

But don't get me wrong, I'm not happy to see a lot of series on American TV. The never-ending Serial genre has always had a chic, cult following in the U.S., because it was so unique and obscure. It's sudden national exposure on the Fox Network may over expose it and pave the way for more runnings of Japanese TV. I hope POWER RANGERS bombs and fails in the U.S., much like DYNAMAN did about five years before.

Where as oldies like ULTRAMAN and JOHNNY SOKKO come to the U.S. in pure form (most footage intact), POWER RANGERS proves the American public has become incredibly racist. Virtually all the original film of Japanese actors has been spliced out, only the special effects remain! The new cast members are Americans, all looking like rejects from SAVED BY THE BELL. In fact, the majority of each episode of POWER RANGERS is new American footage. It's a wonder they didn't just make their own series out of scratch. On average, there's only about ten minutes of original ZYU RANGER scenes per episode, the

remainder is of American suburban collage age yuppies, pretending to play high school students (nearly the whole show takes place at some high school campus or youth center). However, the villains are indeed from the original Japanese episode of ZYU RANGER, and as such, their costumes are outlandish and spectacular! These monsters are lead by Bandora (Batain in the English version), played by the queen of Japanese superhero villains! Machiko Soba! An amazing, after years of playing evil villains, amazons and invaders, she's finally being dubbed in English and seen on American TV. However, the crime of all crimes is she's given no credit, nor are any other players from Japan (though Toei is quickly mentioned as the credits roll by very faintly). This is unforgivable, and really nasty old Seban Entertainment. Again, I wish POWER RANGERS would fail miserably, but I fear it'll be a whopping success. After all, what's to compare it with on American children's TV? BARNEY? Everything else-out here is a fucking cartoon. So here comes this live action series full of the best, most colorful and plentiful FX ever seen on American kiddie TV! After endless cartoons and predictable crap, comes this series of 30 minute blockbusters full of dinosaurs, robots, zombies, monsters, laser beams, flicks, costumes, and explosions. Compared to BATMAN and X-MEN cartoons, POWER RANGERS is quite refreshing, some quality superheroes for once. Yet I can't help but despise POWER RANGERS because of the horrible way the Americans butchered it to pieces, removing any hint of Japanese origin. Needless to say, the original Japanese version is infinitely superior, even if the Japanese actresses look a little like that of Amy Jo Johnson's! For more on the Japanese version, see CC#14, page 47.

To be fair, the five young adults chosen to replace the Japanese actors play their parts well. Given they're stupid characters, but that's the fault of the writers, and besides, as kiddie shows, even the original Japanese casts have to always ham it up in the most childish ways imaginable. What surprises me is that TV GUIDE subtitled this show POWER RANGERS-Teenagers! It's far too infernal for that age group! Our five American actors consist of a token black, token geek, an oriental girl, and an actor called Austin St. John. Despite the acting ability of public her, he's got some serious martial arts skills. If only American censorship weren't so rampant, he could really kick ass and add to the series and not distract from it. Another likeable character, especially to heterosexual males, is a gymnast played by Amy Jo Johnson. Attractive is putting it mildly, especially since her wardrobe consists largely of form-fitting garments which emphasize the bust. I never knew seven-

year old boys masturbated. Another good thing about POWER RANGERS is the clean editing, it really looks like Amy Jo Johnson, Austin St. John and the others are in the same place as the villains. Of course, Seban Entertainment was smart enough to buy many of the original costumes from Toei, to give the illusion that when a monster is rampaging Tokyo, he's actually in LA! There are occasional editing flaws though, like an early one where a pig monster visits what's obviously Tokyo Tower!

The story takes place at an American high school, and the only one in the nation where even the "tough kids" don't bring guns to class, in order to battle the sinister monsters, demons, cyborgs and mutants of the ancient empire of Bandora. A super computer called Zord changes 5 students into the Zyu Rangers (Power Rangers, in English, a high-tech form of superheroes). I don't recall the English names of these five heroes, but their Japanese names are: Tyrano Ranger (not Austin St. John), Tiger Ranger (yellow, Thuy Tien), Mammoth Ranger (black, Walter Jones), and Pteran Ranger (pink, Amy Jo Johnson). Using their ray guns, swords, mechanical chameleons, martial arts, giant robots and other weapons, they're battling Bandora's evil queen Rika (Machiko Soba). Whether you know her as Bandora or Rika, it's actress Machiko Soba, no stranger to Japanese sci-fi. There are additional characters, like a couple annoying students meant to be bullies, who's poor attempts at humor nearly ruin an already ruined scene. 7/2



The original Japanese cast battles henchmen! These scenes were cut from the English release.



FILIPINO FILMS

This continuing column, **FILIPINO FILMS** first started as a joke in 1990, when OC#10 added **FILIPINO CORNER** to its lineup of Asian film coverage. In time, it grew like a dick in a strip joint, to the average-size column it is today. Reviewing movies from the Philippines has proved to be a major test of my love of Far Eastern flicks! But if nothing else, it has redefined what a true 'movie fan' is. Some suburban geek who only rents American films may consider himself a movie fan, but he's actually just an 'American movie fan.' It takes time, devotion, and patience to seek out obscure movies from far away lands, and although many new discoveries suck like a black hole, it's always an eye-opening experience, making outer regions that much less mysterious.

In future OCs, as it continues to evolve, I hope to include rare stuff from Vietnam and India. Any voluntary, masochistic writers? After all, with me exposing the productions of Japan, Hong Kong, Korea, Taiwan and now even the Philippines, I lack the time to discover new countries. If ever you choose to view a Filipino movie, be forewarned: Most are pathetically cheap, and heavy on the dialogue. No English subtitles are ever

added, as that would cost more than the full production itself. But on very rare occasions, some, like **KILLING OF SATAN** and **BIOKIDS** have been dubbed. With horrendous production values and tons of talking in Tagalog, many are virtually unwatchable. In all honesty, were it not for OC, I would not waste my money on Filipino movies. But I've never regretted watching these unique films once I made the initial effort, and it always proves enlightening or educational.

The world of Filipino films will always remain obscure, I can't see this genre getting wide exposure outside the Philippines. But who knows? One day, will American con-geeks be tossing aside their John Woo & Tsui Hark films in favor of the latest epic by Raymond Bang Awila, Joey De Leon, Rene Requiestas, Edu Manzano, Kampee De Leon, or Robin Padilla? Will shrimps and overweight couch potatoes begin jerking off to pictures of Filipino starlets like Arjanette Abayan?

Left: Arjanette Abayan
Right: Sheryl Cruz





Lili Madrigal

Vins Morales, Sheryl Cruz, Nanette Medved or Lili Madrigal? THAT'S already begun.

For this edition, I've chosen to spotlight the two Revillas, father and son. The older, Ramon Revilla, seems to have been typecast as a ghostbuster in films like *ELIAS PANIKI* and *KILLING OF SATAN*. He later would become a senator. He still makes an occasional movie appearance, but is now more into politics than time. His son, a heartthrob in the Philippines, is called Raymond 'Bong' Revilla Jr., sometimes just Bong Revilla, sometimes just Raymond Revilla Jr. He's an action star, and was in *ISANG BALA ISANG BUHAY* (OC#10), and this issue's *DUGU NG PANDAY*. But of course, no Fil-column would be complete without some more moronic silliness from Joey De Leon and Tony Reyes.

THE KILLING OF SATAN

Released by Paragon Video Productions, Produced by Cinex Films Inc., Starring Ramon Revilla and Elizabeth Oropesa.

Ramon Revilla, who played a Filipino vampire-buster in *ELIAS PANIKI* (OC#13), plays a similar role in this similar movie. The only reason I checked out *KILLING OF SATAN* was because it popped up in English, though hidden at a local suburban video store much like Blockbuster. English dubbings of Fil-flicks are a scarce as MTV-viewers with active brain cells, so I decided to check out *KILLING OF SATAN*. The dubbing consists of unfamiliar voices (no 'but stiffs), and a few characters still have Filipino accents, so maybe it's they who dubbed it. The story is talky and slow paced, so I'd have hated it in Tagalog. Being a Fil-film, everything is very cheap, after all, the only nuch Filipinos back then were them Marcos sleazebags. However, there are a couple of nice little FX which popped up here and there, surprising me! Other scenes

are battles where wizards shoot beams and fire off their hands, though not super imposed as well as those in Chinese movies. Yet for these scattered FX, I recommend you fantasy/horror fans see it if it's easily obtainable. It was for me, but if it had been two full inches out of my reach, I would not have made the effort to step closer and grab it.

Ramon Revilla Sr. plays Landu, a heroic do-gooder. One minute, he's in a shootout with vengeful bandits, and the next, he's off to some remote island to rescue his daughter from Satan, who wants to marry her. I must say, I sympathize with Satan. What few of my readers actually get laid can relate too, to when you're dating a girl who's parents dislike you. Once my date's father told me, "Have her home by midnight, or it's your ass!" To which I replied, "My, aren't you a kinky fellow! You bet I'll be back by midnight! How do we get rid of your daughter for the night?"

But more importantly, Landu inherited magical powers from the deceased (now an aquatic zombie) Uncle Miguel and some old wizard in a cave. Satan is assisted by his own cuit of evil magicians, whom Landu fights in a cave. He also encounters a weird goblin, and sexy, seductive witches who change into cats, dogs & snakes. Speaking of snakes, I'm appalled at the way these beautiful creatures are treated as mere props by these lousy Filipino basterds. I'd hate to think how many involuntary 'stunt snakes' were killed or hurt during the many cave battles. But eventually, Landu rescues a group of naked women, and his clothed daughter, from the magical Satanists. He magic kills Satan, who appears to be some guy in a Halloween costume. * 1/2

DUGU NG PANDAY

Presented by Regal Films, Assoc. Prod.: Kenneth Paul De Leon, Story: Eque Gallaca, Lore Reyes, Don Escudero, Jerry Lopez Sinimang, Screenplay: Jerry Lopez Sinimang. Based on the 'Panday' series created by Carlos J. Caparas, Editors: Dennis Gloria, Costume Design: Milla Quizon, CAST: Ramon 'Bong' Revilla Jr. as Herio Panday, Edu Manzano as Conde, and featuring: Leo Martinez, Max Alvarado, Jo Mendoza, Aiko Melendez.

Until I saw this enchanting fantasy, I never thought I'd actually enjoy a Filipino movie for what it was, as it was meant to be enjoyed. That seemed as likely as finding an intellectual watching *BARNEY*. But this *DUGU NG PANDAY* is no unintentional comedy. Its superb production values elevate it far above the dreck I've come to expect from the Philippines! By their standards, this virtually flawless epic must be an incredible masterpiece. This entertaining drama/adventure proves that Filipino movie



Above: Edu Manzano

Below: Aiko Melendez



makers can give Hong Kong and Japan a run for their money! If more major movies like this appear, Filipino movies will finally earn a spot on the map of movie making! Wars translated in English, it would have serious potential for Cannes or any other international film festival. If you only watch one Fill-film in your life, make it this one. I'm NOT saying it's wild fun, immensely entertaining or action packed, but definitely my favorite Fill-film to date (though the competition is bleak at best).

My understanding of Tagalog rivals my understanding of a dog who always sticks his head out a speeding car's window, and yet he neatly bit my nose off when I blew in his face. Yet lack of translation didn't make me press the 'Scan' button more than twice. Sure, there's too much dialogue, yet I still got the basics of this romantic adventure. Ramon Revilla Jr. (ISANG BALA ISNAG BUHAY) plays Huevo Panday, and unfortunate, down-trodden hero. His girlfriend caught the eye of a Caucasian villain, Conde (Edu Manzano, villain in DARNAY). Conde and his followers are European colonists, and corrupt ones, you know how these Caucasian imperialists are! So the Filipinos hate us too! However, the setting appears to be the Middle East, because of the existence of turbans and belly dancers, yet Filipinos make lousy Arabs! I assume it takes place in Tibet, Filipinos can pass for Tibetans, but not Indians or Egyptians.

Okay, so Huevo is hassled by Conde and other foreign devils. In this case, 'foreign devil' is literal. The invading whites are afflicted with a magical cut who bring the dead back to life! So the deserts are crawling with hungry zombies! Not only that, but Conde turns out to be a robot, yet this takes place in the old days! Wait! There's more! The leading villain is a talking head submerged in a large tank of water! How can poor unfortunate Ramon Revilla defeat all these enemies, plus ninja-like swordsmen who travel under the sand? With his newly found magic sword, of course! Though the action isn't great, there are fat fights, swordplay, FX, & explosions before the hero gets the girl. **1/2

PANDAY ANG ALALAY NG PANDAY

Viva Video, 1993, in association with

Moviestars Production, Story & Screenplay: Tony Y. Reyes, Vic Sotto & Joey De Leon, CAST: Joey De Leon, Marz, Sharmaine Aranz, Sunshine Cruz, Val Sotto

Joey De Leon's latest and worst satire. We've seen him satirize Batman, Superman and He-Man, his new target is the Successful Filipino movie previously reviewed, DUGU NG PANDAY. Again, the spoof is too cheap to do an effective parody, it lacks 25% the budget of the original! So most of PANDAY ANG ALALAY NG PANDAY is a

come ashore to kidnap women from a fishing village. So eventually, De Leon and his magic sword go into action. Again, the first half of the movie seems to be an original drama, the spoofing of the other film doesn't set in until we see more of the evil Arabs, around the middle of the film. There's a female hero who knows some martial arts, and she battles an evil witch who has a 'monster hand' (a puppet that looks like the plant monster from LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS, which I hated too). But our

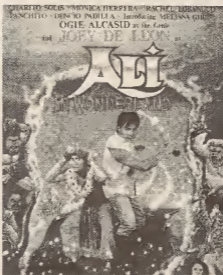
heroic Joey De Leon is far less spectacular. His fighting skill is even worse than that of Ramon Revilla Jr., from the first film. The battle on the desert, with De Leon sword fighting more 'sand ninjas', is only amusing if you've seen the original movie.

ALI IN WONDERLAND

1991, Presented by Philam Video International, Directed by Tony Reyes, Story & Screenplay: Joey De Leon, Production Design: Melchor Defensor, Starring: Joey De Leon, Panchito, Chantos Sols, Monica Herrera, Rachel Lobanco, Dencio Padilla, Melissa Gibbs, and Ogie Alcasid as the Genie.

Now I'm starting to respect Joey De Leon, the Roger Corman of the Philippines, for what he is. He and partner in crime Tony Reyes are masters of low budget exploitation! SHE-MAN made me suspect that they take a popular superhero or theme, and then exploit it for as little money as possible. Hell,

most of the movie needn't be about fantasy or superheroes until the last 30 minutes! What happens before is pointless filler, shot in a cheap bamboo village! No expenses, no FX, no production values until the last half hour! By then, it will be too late for the viewer to get his money back. Then I saw PANDAY ANG ALALAY NG PANDAY, reviewed previously, which confirmed my suspicions of his rotten films. So here I go again, watching ALI IN WONDERLAND, and you know what? It's the exact same thing! I swear, there's a full hour of talking, before it finally has any sense of thrill or adventure! Fortunately, the last 30 minutes are adequate. They're not worth sitting through the first hour though, it's important to Fast Forward (not to be confused with 'Scanning',



pointless, lame drama, set in a typically poor village made of bamboo. The setting is in this Filipino village, and in modern times, eliminating any similarity to the original, which took place in the Middle East (I think), a few hundred years ago. This poor excuse of a satire has only a few scattered FX, and endless talking. Too bad, since anybody who's seen ALYAS BATMAN EN ROBIN or SHEMAN MISTRESS OF THE UNIVERSE knows Joey De Leon has the ability to be somewhat entertaining. Joey again plays a blacksmith who obtains magic powers to fight powerful villains, as in SHEMAN. The story is hard for me to figure out, since I had my finger on the Scan button through most of the movie. After what seemed like an hour of pointless meandering, Arabian villains

or 'Fast Play' Like many other De Leon films, this one looks amateur, like some super 8mm flick you'd read about in INDEPENDENT VIDEO or BACKYARD CINEMA.

It helps to understand Tagalog, but I gather Joey De Leon plays a lower class fisherman down on his luck. His beautiful girlfriend is destined to be married to some rich mobster, as part of some sort of prearranged marriage. So after endless dis-

logue and bullshit, Joey, as Ali, discovers a genie bottle on the beach. He releases the genie, who helps him to fight off the mobsters. The genie doesn't do a lot of magic, but performs a number of karate kicks as he and Ali (Joey De Leon) take on the bad guys. Then for some reason, both heroes take a canoe to a dangerous, primitive island. There they encounter a gorilla monster, a cyclops, and various tribes. Midget tribe, sexy amazon tribe, and a villainous tribe of 'lizard men' (they have lizard tails and blue

lips). These various battles and chases are remotely entertaining; the action isn't great, but the store bought Halloween costumes are put to good use.

Later, Ali and the genie get on a flying carpet and return to the Philippines, where those same mobsters have kidnapped Ali's girlfriend. There's a brief shoot out which isn't bad, and offers a chuckle or two."

CELLULOID ASSASSINS

Also called **WATARI THE NINJA BOY** and **WATARI DAI-NINJUTSU EIGA**, this is Toei's influential fantasy from 1986, starring Yoshinobu Kaneko, Japan's spoiled brat of ninjutsu. Based on a comic book by Senpei Shiretsu. **

WHITE PHANTOM (A) - Definitely one of the better U.S.-made ninja movies, featuring a white ninja (Jay Roberts Jr.) dealing with a triad in H.K. The hero is remotely amusing, and the fights, done by Hong Kongese, are better than average for a U.S. movie. The leader of the villains is called Hanzo Sakure,

played by Jimmy Lee (speaking English), who'd later push women out of windows in **GOD OF GAMBLERS 1 & 4**. Beautiful Page Leong plays an erotic dancer. **

WOMAN NINJAS (J) - This Toei '85 film shouldn't be confused with the 1991 video-series under the same Japanese title, **KUNOICHI NINPO-CHO**.

WORLD NINJA WAR: JIRAIYA (J) - Childish yet entertaining superhero TV series reviewed in OCs 8 and 14. Futuristic ninjas of all shapes and sizes battle it out, in search of a treasure called Paco. Elaborate FX. **1/2

HONG KONG HEROES

enhances her femininity. Yet the other men in the film are fooled, until she and Yuen Hua finally tell in love. After plenty of mumbo

jumbo, subplots and nonsense, our heroes confront the mysterious enemy, Chu Er Ming. But there are several Chu Er Mings! They all wear Chu Er Ming masks, which explains how this corrupt phantom can be so many places at once. This climactic

confrontation is made all the more confusing because of the gadgets involved: flags, magnets, fans, hats, sun disks, and other shit which, as Husker Du might say, "makes no sense at all."

AMY YIP

(continued from back cover.)

hekel!" His statement is in defense of latest rumors that GB's last film revealed a uniform scar under her breast's fold. Upset by the rumors, Yip allowed a female reporter to examine her breast's authenticity, and explained what appears as scars under her breast was actually double sided tape used for support. And the statement led to an actor claiming that he personally squeezed her boobs. "It's solid!" (Meaning it's real). "Did that actor who just yelled in public, squeeze your breast?" - "Of course not", answered Yip, "although he did touch my chest once to see if it was real. I didn't get mad at him, but I will allow it only once." There were other actors and actresses who testified for the authenticity of Yip's breasts.

Yip takes all these tabloids in stride. But there is one thing that did annoy her. "I don't understand why some people refuse to be in the same photos with me. Do I do something to offend them?" - "They think you have the title of GB and can't compete with you" - "That doesn't make any sense. They think my chest is large, but I have a better figure than they do, but I'm sure some out there

have a better figure than I do. It's all very natural. I feel hurt when they make fun of me using lies like this, one actor claims his chest hurt during a sex scene, because of my breasts. Some said I planned all these rumors for the publicity. I'm human, I have



Amy Yip

integrity. I've tried to take these kinds of comments with a grain of salt, but the truth is, it hurts to hear these lies about me." - "Did you get so angry that you cried?" - "Everyone cries sometimes, but crying doesn't help any, and if I dwell on these little matters, I'll never feel good again."

Yip is HK's only "strip" star who's clean to fame is "Giant Breasts" and became the hot gossip topic of the town. Other "strip" stars can only eat her dust. "Am I that famous? I don't think so. I think when you go to a public place and the fans come in thousands to see you, then you're famous." - "I think you have achieved that, every time you go out, all eyes are on you" - "It's different, they're just curious, not admiration. I don't have it like the superstars." - "Are there a lot of men chasing after you right now? And isn't there a man in your life?" - "No, they're only social friends. People think I'm wild and exotic, but I'm just the opposite, and very lonely." - "You said many times in the past that you choose acting over relationships, did you change your mind?" - "Girls have big hearts. Work is fine, but when you're too busy, then you wish some one would come along to take care and love you. But right now, that's asking too much."

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